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# INTERMEDIATE CANTONESE

A GRAMMAR AND WORKBOOK

Virginia Yip and  
Stephen Matthews

CANTONESE

## INTERMEDIATE CANTONESE: A GRAMMAR AND WORKBOOK

*Intermediate Cantonese* is designed for learners who have achieved basic proficiency and wish to progress to more complex language. Each of the 25 units combines clear, concise grammar explanations with communicatively oriented exercises to help build confidence and fluency.

Features include:

- many authentic examples from contemporary media, including films, advertising, songs and soap operas
- clear differentiation between colloquial and more formal speech registers
- up-to-date analysis of contemporary Cantonese as spoken in Hong Kong

Suitable for independent learners and students on taught courses, *Intermediate Cantonese*, together with its sister volume, *Basic Cantonese*, forms a structured course of the essentials of Cantonese grammar.

**Virginia Yip** is Associate Professor at the Department of Modern Languages and Intercultural Studies, Chinese University of Hong Kong. **Stephen Matthews** is Associate Professor at the Department of Linguistics, University of Hong Kong. They are the authors of *Basic Cantonese: A Grammar and Workbook* (2000) and *Cantonese: A Comprehensive Grammar* (1994).

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Virginia Yip and Stephen Matthews



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*For Alicia Tīn Wihng,  
in celebration of a new millennium –  
Chīn Hēi Lìhn*



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# INTRODUCTION

Designed as a companion volume to *Basic Cantonese*, *Intermediate Cantonese* covers further topics not introduced there, and revisits others in more detail. Following on where *Basic Cantonese* left off, the grammatical topics become more intricate and the examples more complex. The approach taken is similar: we aim to describe the structure of the language as spoken by the Cantonese people, rather than prescribing how it should be spoken. Together, the two workbooks should also make our *Cantonese: A Comprehensive Grammar* accessible to learners as a reference book.

At a more general level, this book suits any learners of Cantonese who have achieved elementary proficiency and are looking to progress to more complex language which will allow them to converse on more demanding topics: to express themselves and communicate in a more effective and sophisticated manner thoughts and feelings as well as mere information; to phrase questions politely, acknowledge compliments appropriately, apologize, complain and even make the occasional joke. Such uses of language call for the right choice of words and structures, to name just the bare essentials.

## **Cantonese in the twenty-first century**

It should be stressed that at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Cantonese is by no means on its way out. To many minds, Putonghua seems to be gaining in status and importance at the expense of Cantonese which may be perceived to be under threat in the face of political and linguistic domination. Yet far from being an endangered language, Cantonese remains the predominant daily language in Hong Kong and is acquiring many more learners from China and around the Pacific Rim. Not only Westerners (Americans, British and Australians, Europeans) but also Asians such as Japanese, Koreans and mainland Chinese are learning Cantonese for both cultural and economic reasons.

Following the transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong in 1997 and Macau in 1999 to the People's Republic of China, Putonghua has begun to be more widely used in these cities as well as in Guangdong province. Cantonese nevertheless remains as vibrant and popular as ever, spoken as a vernacular and written in various forms. Under the policy of 'one country two systems' (*yāt gwok léuhng jái*) and the promise of 'no change for fifty years' (*ngh-sahp hūn bāt hūn*) which guarantee a distinctive cultural profile, we expect that Cantonese will continue to thrive. Indeed, the continued and uninhibited use of Cantonese may be taken as one of the litmus tests of these pledges.

At the outset of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, official policy has been for its citizens to be trilingual (in Cantonese, Mandarin and English) and biliterate (in written Chinese and English). This is embodied in the slogan *léuhng mahn sāam yúh*, 'two written languages (*mahn*) and three spoken languages (*yúh*)'. No doubt such a multilingual policy and its success is vital to the future of Hong Kong as a commercial, cultural and technological hub of southern China and the international gateway to the rest of the world. The medium of instruction in most schools is Cantonese, following the mother-tongue education policy (*móuh-yúh gauu-hohk*) introduced in 1998. Even if this policy were changed and Cantonese replaced by Putonghua as the medium of education, it would take at least a generation for Cantonese to be superseded as the everyday language of the community. Policy apart, most speakers have an attachment to their language as a marker of identity and as a vehicle for Cantonese culture, from traditional operas and nursery rhymes to soap operas, films and songs.

## Speech registers

In any language, chat among friends is relatively informal and colloquial, whereas reports and presentations at a business meeting are more formal. Just as an apology to a close friend or family member couched in a formal way will seem absurd (or comical), addressing a meeting in overly colloquial language will be badly out of place. The book therefore concludes with a series of units focusing on the differences between formal and informal speech, especially as they affect grammar.

In order to do justice to the lively and colourful character of the language, we use authentic examples wherever possible. The examples aim to illustrate how speakers use the language in real life situations as well as how the grammatical structures work. Hoping to convey a true picture of how Cantonese is used in the streets of Hong Kong, we have included examples from television advertisements, news reports, radio programmes, soap operas and films. Such authentic examples represent what ordinary

people actually **speak** rather than what they write. The sources of such examples are **specifically** indicated where they are of special interest.

## Spoken Cantonese and written Chinese

Spoken Cantonese stands in a complicated relationship to Chinese writing. At the extremes, it is useful to distinguish 'High' and 'Low' Cantonese. 'High Cantonese' is the kind of language used in legal, academic and other professional contexts. It is close to standard written Chinese in grammar and vocabulary. Television news broadcasts, based on a written script but read with some spoken Cantonese features, epitomize this register. 'Low' Cantonese as used in domestic and other informal contexts is further from written Chinese, especially in terms of grammar and vocabulary: for example, comparisons are made colloquially with **gwo** rather than **béi** (see Unit 13).

It is not easy to write Cantonese as it is spoken, since there has never been a standard script and the necessary characters are lacking for many colloquial words (such as the verb in **wé-ngán** 'grab money' and the adjective **lé-he** 'clumsy', 'messy'). Writers who attempt to represent Cantonese in characters, such as journalists wishing to reflect the exact words of their interviewees, resort to various tricks such as using English letters ('D' to represent the comparative 㗎) and quasi-phonetic spelling ('mit' for **mīt** 'to tear'). Any such texts will fall foul of language purists who frown on such deviations from standard Chinese writing.

## Note on exercises

Many exercises permit more than one answer, and alternative answers given in the Key are intended to be indicative rather than definitive. Words which can be left out are given in parentheses. The dagger † indicates more demanding exercises.

## Using this book

This grammar and workbook aims to achieve the following for the learner of Cantonese:

- i provide exposure to a slightly more advanced level of input and grammatical patterns,
- ii raise the learner's metalinguistic awareness of many aspects of Cantonese grammar, and

- iii help those who approach the learning of language in an analytic manner by means of explicit explanation and highlighting of difficult points.

We believe that language is inherently creative; once learners master the major rules and patterns, they will naturally use the language in a productive and creative way to come up with novel phrases of their own. We encourage active experimenting with the language and actual use of language whenever possible; hence the open-ended nature of some of the exercises. Learners who are able to consult a native speaker can check their responses and elicit alternatives. All should bear in mind that there is nothing wrong with making mistakes: indeed, Cantonese speakers are impressed when foreigners attempt their language, and they will be amused rather than offended by errors.

Finally, we hope that just as our own appreciation of Cantonese has increased by leaps and bounds as a result of much musing on its various intriguing properties and structures, so will any native or second language speaker's appreciation of the language. The grammar of Cantonese will no doubt continue to surprise and fascinate us, and hopefully our readers too.

Hong Kong, August 1999







# UNIT ONE

## Consonants and vowels

In this unit, we assume familiarity with the basic sounds of consonants and vowels as described in *Basic Cantonese*. Building on this base, we review some of the main difficulties and delve further into variation among these sounds. To represent sounds accurately, symbols from the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) are given in square brackets: [ʃ], for example, represents the consonant in 'shoe'.

### Difficulties for English speakers

Certain Cantonese sounds pose particular difficulties for native speakers of English and, in some cases, other European languages. These include:

- Front rounded vowels: **yu** as in **syū** 'book', and **eu** as in **geuk** 'foot'
- Affricates: **j** as in **jā** 'drive', and **ch** as in **chóh** 'sit'

### Rounded vowels

Rounded vowels are produced with the lips 'rounded' or pursed. In English, only the back vowels **o** as in 'hope' and **u** (as in 'who') are rounded. In Cantonese, the front vowels **yü** and **eu** are also rounded: **yü** is produced like **i**, and **eu** like **e**, with the addition of lip rounding. These vowels do not have precise equivalents in English. **yü** (fish) should not sound like English **you**, or **jeuk** (wear) like **jerk**: in each case the lips must be rounded outwards to produce the right vowel sound (pouting may help here)

**eu** is especially difficult since its quality varies according to the following consonant sound:

*Longer, lower* [œ:]  
**chéung** rob

*Shorter, higher* [ø]  
**chéun** stupid

séung wish  
chéung window  
leuhng capacity  
jéung a surname  
sèuh slide

seun believe  
chéut go out  
leuh rate  
jēun bottle  
sèuh pure

## Long and short diphthongs

While the short vowel **a** and the long **aa** are easily distinguished, the corresponding diphthongs can be more difficult:

<i>Short</i>			<i>Long</i>		
<b>ai</b>	<b>máih</b>	rice (uncooked)	<b>sai</b>	<b>máaih</b>	buy
	<b>tāi</b>	ladder		<b>tāai</b>	tyre
<b>au</b>	<b>gáu</b>	dog; nine	<b>au</b>	<b>gáu</b>	manage; meddle
	<b>lauh</b>	leave behind		<b>lauh</b>	scoop up

In addition to the difference in length, the short diphthong **ai** is noticeably different in quality from long **sai**, much as **a** differs from **aa**. It begins with a much less open vowel and can sound almost like **ei**.

## Alternative pronunciations

Alternative pronunciations of sounds (technically known as allophones) occur in certain positions. Learners should be able to recognize these and may try to produce them in appropriate places.

The vowels **i** and **a** have a different quality before the velar sounds **k** and **ng**, where they are more open than usual. Consequently they can sound like a different vowel altogether:

**sihk** (eat) tends to sound like **sehk** (stone)  
**duhk** (study) tends to sound like **dohk** (to measure)  
**dihng** (steady) tends to sound like **dehng** (to order, reserve)  
**sung** (give) tends to sound like **song** (to lose, as in **song-sāt**)

In fact there is an uncertainty inherent in the language here, since in some cases both vowels are used for the same meaning: **sìhng** and **sèhng** 'whole', for example, are both used (**sìhng** is the more formal pronunciation, mandatory in reading a text aloud and in certain words such as **sìhng-gūng** 'succeed', while **sèhng** is colloquial).

## Palatalization

The fricative 's' tends to change when followed by the rounded vowels **yu** and **eu**:

<b>syü</b> book	towards [ʃ] as in 'shoe'
<b>séung</b> want	towards [ʃ] as in 'sherbet'

Just as in English 'issue' and 'tissue' may be pronounced carefully with [s] or more casually with [ʃ], so the Cantonese 's' tends towards [ʃ] when the following vowel is **yu** or **eu**. This effect, termed palatalization, also affects the affricates **j** and **ch** before the same vowels:

<b>jyuh</b> to live	towards [tʃ] as in 'Jew' (but still unvoiced)
<b>jeui</b> most	towards [tʃ] as in 'Joe'
<b>chyüh</b> whole	towards [tʃ] as in 'choose'
<b>chéui</b> marry (take a wife)	towards [tʃ] as in 'church'

Consequently, the 'ch' sound in these words resembles rather closely the English 'ch' in 'choose'. Contrast this with the usual sound of **ch**, [ts'] as in **chóh** 'sit' which should not sound like English 'chore'.

## Sound changes

A further source of variation involves ongoing sound changes, whereby particular sounds are being lost or are changing.

### i Initial consonants

<b>n-</b> becomes <b>l-</b> :	<b>néui</b> → <b>léui</b>	daughter
<b>ng-</b> disappears:	<b>ngóh</b> → <b>óh</b>	I
<b>gw-</b> becomes <b>g-</b> :	<b>gwok</b> → <b>gok</b>	country
<b>kw-</b> becomes <b>k-</b> :	<b>kwòhng</b> → <b>kòhng</b>	crazy

Though purists may insist on **néih** over **léih** 'you', this pronunciation is becoming rarer as the sound change takes its course. This means that the words merge with existing words with **l-**, so that **nàahm** 'south' sounds the same as **làahm** 'blue'. The form **nī** 'this' shows some resistance to the change (apparently because there are no existing syllables of the form **lī** in Cantonese) so that one hears either **nīdoh** or **līdoh** 'here'.

There is a tendency for **ng** to be lost at the beginning of a word, but many words vary:

**aap** or **ngaap** duck  
**ūk** or **ngūk** house  
**ok** or **ngok** fierce (of animals), strict (of teachers)  
**ōnchyhūn** or **ngōnchyhūn** safe

A traditional rule of thumb which remains useful is that **ng** appears in syllables with low tones:

*High and mid tones*

**aai** shout  
**aaui** argue  
**Daaih On Tai O**  
**tóuh** ō diarrhoea

*Low tones*

**ngàaih** suffer  
**ngàuh** cow  
**gīn-ngonh** proud  
**tóuh ngoh** hungry

Syllables beginning with **gw** tend to become **g** especially in casual speech:

**Gwóngjām** → **Góngjāu** Guangzhou (Canton)  
**gwok-gā** → **gok-gā** nation

This change depends on the following vowel, and does not generally affect syllables with the vowel **a**:

**gwa** hang  
**gwai** expensive

ii Syllabic consonants

As initial **ng-** disappears, the few words consisting of the consonant **ng** alone change to **m**:

<b>ng</b> becomes <b>m</b>	<b>ng̃h mǎn</b> → <b>m̃h mǎn</b>	five dollars
	<b>ng̃h-gái</b> → <b>m̃h-gái</b>	misunderstanding
	<b>Ñgh síujé</b> → <b>M̃h síujé</b>	Miss Ng

This change affecting the surname **Ñgh** leads to jokes whereby, for example, the well-intended girl's name **Ñgh Sī-Màhn** 'Grace Ng' sounds like **m̃h símàhn** 'not graceful'.

iii Final consonants

**-ng** becomes **-n**

This change is especially common after the long vowel **aa-**

**hohksaang** → **hohksaan** student

Again this merger leads to more words sounding the same. For example, the word **sāng-duhng** 'lively' sounds the same as **sān-duhng** meaning 'cave' (note that the change does not apply to **duhng** because of the different vowel). Similarly, **-t** and **-k** tend to merge so that **sāk-chē** 'congested' (traffic) sounds like **sāt-chē** 'missing car', while **bākbihn** 'north side' sounds like **hāfbihn** 'inconvenient'.

### Exercise 1.1

Pronounce the following pairs with particular attention to the vowels.

- |                           |                       |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 <b>luhk</b> six; green  | <b>lohk</b> down      |
| 2 <b>muhk</b> wood        | <b>mohk</b> curtain   |
| 3 <b>tùhng</b> go with    | <b>tòhng</b> sugar    |
| 4 <b>gīng</b> pass by     | <b>gēng</b> be afraid |
| 5 <b>sihk</b> eat         | <b>sehk</b> stone     |
| 6 <b>waih</b> stomach     | <b>waaih</b> broken   |
| 7 <b>hai</b> close        | <b>haai</b> worship   |
| 8 <b>māu</b> crouch       | <b>māau</b> cat       |
| 9 <b>sing</b> rise        | <b>sēng</b> sound     |
| 10 <b>juhk</b> colloquial | <b>jobk</b> dig       |

### Exercise 1.2

Pronounce the following pairs paying attention to the initial, final consonants and vowels.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1 <b>Bāt bin ge deihfōng</b><br>Unchanged places                                   | <b>Bāk bihn ge deihfōng</b><br>Northern places                             |
| 2 <b>Kéuih jūngyi choisām</b><br>She likes vegetables                              | <b>Kéuih jūngyi chēuih sām</b><br>She likes to take off her clothes        |
| 3 <b>Kéuih fóngmahn-gwo yāt bun yàhn</b><br>She has interviewed half of the people | <b>Kéuih fóngmahn-gwo Yāhtbún yàhn</b><br>She has interviewed the Japanese |
| 4 <b>Jeni gīng haih léih</b><br>You're the best                                    | <b>Jeni gēng haih léih</b><br>You're the most afraid                       |
| 5 <b>Kéuih jeni lénihyán</b><br>S/he's most like a woman                           | <b>Kéuih jēni lénihyán</b><br>S/he chases after women                      |

### Exercise 1.3

Pronounce the following 'tongue twisters' widely circulated among Cantonese speakers, paying attention to the initial and final consonants. Begin slowly before gradually increasing speed.

- 1 **Jā sihk dik daap dik si heui sihk dō sihk dō si**  
Hold a stick take a taxi to go to the store to eat toast
- 2 **Yahp sahtyihmsāt gam gán-gáp-jai**  
Go into the laboratory and press the emergency button
- 3 **Mahkdōnghuhng daai Mahkdōng-nàh heui Mahkdōnglòuh sihk maht-tòhng lóu dōnggwai**  
Mak Dong Hung takes Madonna to MacDonalds to eat honey mixed with donggui (Chinese medicine) (from the film *Gámji yuhkyihp* 'He's a woman, she's a man')
- 4 **Gwaht gām gwaht gāt gwaht gāi gwāt**  
Dig gold, dig orange, dig chicken bone
- 5 **Chèuhng gok-lòk-táu bahng gán gām gwan**  
(lit. wall corner head leaning a gold rod)  
A gold rod leans against the wall in the corner
- 6 **A-Chéung heui gāisih máaih yùh-chéung, gin dóu yih-jéung, gūkgūng yih-jéung, dit-jó yùh-chéung, yih-jéung bōng a-Chéung jáp fān fu yùh-chéung**  
A-Tseung went to market to buy fish intestine, see uncle, bow to uncle, fish intestine falls down, uncle helps A-Tseung to pick up fish intestine
- 7 **Yāt mán máaih gán gāi, yāt mán máaih gán gwai, gāi t'auh máaih gán gāi,**  
(lit. one dollar buy catty chicken, one dollar buy catty turtle, street end buy catty chicken,  
gāi méih máaih gán gwai, gauging gāi gwai dihung gwai gwai?  
street end buy catty turtle, actually chicken expensive or turtle expensive)  
Buy a catty of chicken for one dollar, buy a catty of turtle for one dollar, buy a catty of chicken at the beginning of the street, buy a catty of turtle at the end of the street. Which is more expensive, chicken or turtle?

### Exercise 1.4

Pronounce the words/phrases and names first as written and then with the relevant sound changes.

- 1 **nàahm-sih** gentleman
- 2 **gwo hóí** cross the sea/harbour
- 3 **yùh-sāung** sashimi

- 
- 4 **ngh gwok wuh-yih** meeting of five nations
  - 5 **Ngóh náu gwo méih** I'm more angry than you
  - 6 **Gwūn Tòhng** Kwun Tong (a place in East Kowloon)
  - 7 **Gwóngsai** Guangxi (a province in SW China)
  - 8 **Ngh Méih-lai** Ng Mei-lai ('pretty')
  - 9 **Gwok Fu-sihng** Aaron Kwok Fu-Shing (a singer and film star)
  - 10 **Nàahm-gìng** Nanjing (a city in south central China)



# UNIT TWO

## Tone contours

Tones tend to remain a locus of difficulty for any learners of Chinese, and especially for those whose own native languages do not use them. Recognizing, remembering and producing the tones correctly – or at least close enough to get by with only occasional misunderstandings – should be a priority. In this unit we look in depth at tone contours, the actual pitch levels involved in a given tone.

### Entering tones

The so-called entering tones (known as *rùshēng* in Mandarin or *yahp-sīng* in Cantonese) are those which occur in 'checked' syllables ending in an unreleased stop ('-p', '-t' or '-k'). When Cantonese is described as having nine tones, these three are included in addition to the familiar six. In this book, as in *Basic Cantonese*, the entering tones are simply treated as instances of the high, mid and low level tones:

	<i>Entering tones</i>	<i>Corresponding level tones</i>
High	<b>sāp</b> wet	<b>sā</b> sand
Mid	<b>gwok</b> country	<b>gwo</b> cross
Low	<b>síht</b> lose	<b>síh</b> matter

Note that only the three level tones generally occur in these 'checked' syllables. However, a rising tone can occur as a result of tone change (see Unit 3):

**yuhk** → **yák** jade  
**sehk** → **sék** stone

**waht** → **wát** seed, core  
**dihp** → **díp** dish

## Tone contours

The diacritics used in the Yale romanization system indicate the tones clearly as level, falling or rising, with the silent 'h' indicating the three low register tones. While this makes the tones relatively easy to remember, learners should be aware that these tone markings tend to simplify the actual contours involved, as do the conventional names of the tones. Hence we revisit them here in greater detail.

It can be useful to describe tone contours on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high), so that 55 represents a high level tone, 25 a tone rising from low (2) to high (5):

high level:	55 or 53 as in <i>sām</i> or <i>sàn</i> 'new'
high rising:	25 as in <i>yám</i> 'drink'
mid level:	33 as in <i>fán</i> 'sleep'
low rising:	23 as in <i>lónh</i> 'old'
low level:	22 as in <i>dónh</i> 'road'
low falling:	21 or 11 as in <i>wáahn</i> 'return (give back)'

Some learners also find it useful to draw lines above or beside the word to represent the tone contour.

## High level or high falling?

The first tone, shown in this book as high level (ā), is sometimes pronounced with a high falling contour (shown in the Yale system as à). There is considerable variation here: in Hong Kong the high level contour is increasingly dominant, while in Guangzhou a high fall (52) is common. Given that the two contours are largely interchangeable, learners should not worry unduly about the fact that they are distinguished in some dictionaries and course materials. There are, however, two particles which regularly have a high falling contour when they come at the end of a sentence: *sín* 'first' and *tím* 'in addition'.

## High rising vs. low rising

The names of these tones might suggest that they go from mid to high and low to mid respectively. In fact, these tones begin at the same lowish pitch (2 on the 1 to 5 scale). Moreover, both tend to begin with a slight dip before the rise begins. The difference between them lies in how steeply the tone rises: as high as the high level tone in the case of the high rise (25), but only as far as the mid level tone in the case of low rising (23)

Examples: **lám** 25 flat, apartment vs. **láuh** 23 willow  
**mán** 25 article, paper vs. **máhn** 23 kiss

### Low rising vs. low falling

Again, these might appear to be the reverse of each other, but there is a marked asymmetry. The low rising tone (23) rises to mid level, as described above. The low falling tone begins near the level of the low rising and low level tones, but descends even further (21) – often as far as the speaker's voice range allows. Examples:

**wáih** 23 great vs. **wáih** 21 surround  
**síh** 23 market vs. **síh** 21 time

### Low level vs. low falling

The difference between these two tones poses particular difficulty for many learners. The contours 22 and 21 are similar and the difficulty is compounded by the fact that low falling (21) can sound level (11) at times (especially after another 21 tone). It can often be distinguished by the 'creaky' voice quality which results as the speaker's voice descends to the bottom of its range. Examples:

**yuhng** 22 use vs. **yùhng** 21 melt  
**yíhm** 22 examine vs. **yíhm** 21 salt

### Mid level vs. low rising

The difference in contour between mid level (33) and low rising (23) is rather small. Most speakers do make a distinction between 'minimal pairs' such as the following:

<b>si</b> try	<b>síh</b> market (as in <b>gú-síh</b> stock market, <b>gāi-síh</b> street market)
<b>sín</b> string, line	<b>síhu</b> cel
<b>yau</b> thin, slender	<b>yáuh</b> have

In certain forms of Cantonese, however, including some varieties spoken in Malaysia, the two have merged so that 33 and 23 are merely alternative pronunciations of the same phonological tone, much like the high level 55 and high falling 53 tones as described above. In Hong Kong

Cantonese a similar tendency is apparent, with many younger speakers treating the mid level and low rising tones as interchangeable and even unable to perceive the distinction. The result is that such speakers use a system of five tones rather than the traditional six.

### Exercise 2.1

Pronounce the following pairs so that the difference is clear, and give the tone numbers to represent the tone contours of each word.

- |                    |                 |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| 1 ngáahn eye       | ngaan late      |
| 2 tóuh belly       | tóu earth       |
| 3 lǎhng cage       | lǎng cave, hole |
| 4 máaih buy        | maaih sell      |
| 5 ngāang container | ugahug hard     |
| 6 yeuk contract    | yeuhk medicine  |
| 7 dǎng lamp        | dǎng wait       |
| 8 séuug want       | séuhug come up  |

### Exercise 2.2

Pronounce the following phrases noting where the crucial differences lie

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 1a Waahk yāt tūh sīn             | Draw a line                                    |
| b Waahk yāt tūh sīhn             | Draw an eel                                    |
| 2a Kéuih daai ngáahn-géng        | He wears glasses (spectacles)                  |
| b Kéuih taai ngaahng-géng        | He's too stubborn ( <i>lit.</i> stiff-necked)  |
| 3a Yī hóu ngáahu-jǐng            | Cure eyes                                      |
| b Yī hóu ngàahm-jǐng             | Cure cancer                                    |
| 4a Ngóh yiu cheung chín          | I need to change some money                    |
| b Ngóh yiu chéung chín           | I want to rob (someone of) money               |
| 5a Sung go jáu-gwai làih         | Deliver a drinks cabinet                       |
| b Sung go jáu-gwái làih          | Deliver an alcoholic ( <i>lit.</i> wine-devil) |
| 6a Léih mohng mǎtyéh a?          | What are you staring at?                       |
| b Léih mòhug mǎtyéh a?           | What are you busy with?                        |
| 7a Ngóhdeih heui máaih dǎng      | We're going to buy lights                      |
| b Ngóhdeih heui maaih dǎng       | We're going to sell chairs                     |
| 8a Ngóh jèui sūhk haih Āu jāu sǐ | I'm most familiar with European history        |
| b Ngóh jèui sūhk haih Āu jām sǐh | I'm most familiar with the European markets    |

**Exercise 2.3**

Pronounce the following triplets with distinct tone contours.

- |                       |                       |  |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| 1 <b>láah</b> lazy    | <b>laahn</b> broken   | <b>làahn</b> difficult                               |
| 2 <b>móhng</b> net    | <b>mohng</b> stare at | <b>mòhug</b> busy                                    |
| 3 <b>chēui</b> blow   | <b>cheui</b> crispy   | <b>chēuih (sāam)</b> take off (clothes)              |
| 4 <b>chéung</b> rob   | <b>cheung</b> sing    | <b>chēuhng</b> long                                  |
| 5 <b>máah</b> evening | <b>maahn</b> slow     | <b>(yéh)màahn</b> barbaric                           |
| 6 <b>tiu</b> carry    | <b>tiu</b> jump       | <b>tiuh</b> a classifier for long,<br>slender things |
| 7 <b>būn</b> move     | <b>bun</b> half       | <b>buhn</b> companion                                |
| 8 <b>gōi</b> should   | <b>gói</b> change     | <b>goi</b> cover                                     |
| 9 <b>syūn</b> sour    | <b>syun</b> calculate | <b>syūhn</b> boat                                    |
| 10 <b>sūu</b> burn    | <b>sūu</b> little     | <b>siu</b> laugh                                     |

# UNIT THREE

## Changed tones

Changed tones are cases where the expected ('citation') tone is replaced by a different ('changed') tone. The citation tone is the one which is used when a word is cited on its own, as when it is read from a written character. For example, **tūh** as a classifier is cited with the low falling tone and normally so pronounced, as in **tūh fu** referring to a pair of trousers. However, in words such as **syut-tū** (ice lolly) and **gām-tū** meaning a gold bar, it appears with the high rising changed tone. This results in alternations between a (usually low) tone and a high rising (occasionally high level) one. Such alternations are sufficiently frequent and systematic for learners to need to take note of the main patterns. The ability to produce changed tones serves as a kind of 'shibboleth' identifying the native Cantonese speaker.

### The high rising changed tone

This 'tone change' is a process whereby a tone becomes a high rising tone. This happens in a wide range of circumstances, typically applying to the last syllable of a compound expression:

- In compounds with a specialized meaning:

**sín** string → **gong-sín** steel wire

**wáahn** ring, circle → **yíh-wáahn** earring

**yaht** day → **yàhn-yát** everyone's birthday (the seventh day of the Chinese New Year)

**jaahk-yaht** pick a day → **jaahk-yát** pick a good day (for a wedding, moving house, Caesarean, etc.)

- In names with the personal prefix **a-** or epithets such as **lóuh** (old), typically referring to men familiar to the speaker:

<b>Làih</b> → <b>A-Lái</b>	(Mr) Lai
<b>Wòhng</b> → <b>A-Wóng</b>	(Mr) Wong
<b>Chàuh</b> → <b>Lóuh-Chán</b>	(Old) Mr Chan
<b>Wùh</b> → <b>Wú-jái</b>	young Wu

- In reduplicated names

<b>Lìhng-Líng</b>	Ling
<b>Mìhng-Míng</b>	Ming
<b>Sìhng-Síng</b>	(nickname for the celebrity Aaron Kwok Fu Sing)
<b>Fèih-Féi</b>	Fatty (nickname for a portly character)

- In reduplicated adjectives and adverbs, where the second syllable changes tone:

<b>hàahm</b> salty → <b>hàahm-háam-déi</b>	rather salty
<b>wàhn</b> dizzy → <b>wàhn-wán-déi</b>	a bit dizzy
<b>jeui</b> drunk → <b>jeui-jéui-déi</b>	a bit drunk, tipsy

As the examples suggest, this change applies largely to words with low tones, occasionally to those with mid level tones, and not at all to those with high tones. Note also that most of these patterns involve the last syllable of a compound expression. When it is not the last syllable the change does not apply:

**sìh-tàuh** boss → **sìh-táu** but **sìh-tàuh-pòh** woman boss (not \***sìh-táu-pòh**)  
**mùih-yàhn** matchmaker → **mùih-yáu** but **mùih-yàhn-pòh** woman  
matchmaker

Some cases of tone change are more or less obligatory, while others are optional. The following forms involve obligatory tone change:

<b>yàhn</b> person:	<b>léuih-yán</b> woman <b>làahm-yáu</b> man <b>mùih-yán</b> matchmaker
<b>yáu</b> friend:	<b>tó-yáu</b> boy/girlfriend ( <i>lit.</i> dating pal) <b>móhng-yáu</b> Internet fan/pal <b>faatsíu-yáu</b> fanatic, aficionado
<b>lín</b> year:	<b>seuhng-lín</b> last year. <b>chíuh-lín</b> the year before last <b>chēut-lín</b> next year. <b>haah-lín</b> the year after next

**hòhng** profession, company: **leuhtsi-hóng** solicitors' firm  
**gínggái-hóng** brokers' firm  
**Taaiji-hóng** Prince Building in Central  
**yèuhng hóng** foreign companies e.g.  
**Taaigú yèuhng hóng** The Swire  
 Company  
**ngàhn-hòhng** or **ngàhn-hóng** bank (with  
 optional tone change)

**daai** as a verb 'bring' is in the mid level tone:

**Go mihngsīng daai-jó go léui gin geijé**  
 The film star brought her daughter to see the reporters

but when it functions as a noun for 'belt' or 'strap', the tone is always high rising.

**bīu dáai** watch strap                      **būng dáai** bandage

Similarly, **doih** as a verb 'to pocket' and classifier 'a bag of' (see below) but **dóih** is a noun for 'pocket'; 'bag':

**Kéuih doih-jó yāt baak mán lohk dói**  
 (*lit.* he pocketed one hundred dollars down pocket)  
 He pocketed a hundred dollars

Changed tone is also found in some idiomatic expressions:

**tàuh** → **táu** as in **hám tái màaih chèuhng** bump one's head against the wall

**Kéuih gīk dou chā-dī hám tái màaih chèuhng**  
 He's so angry that he almost banged his head against the wall

In a number of combinations the tone change is optional:

<b>līhn</b> year	<b>gām līhn</b> or <b>gām-lín</b> next year <b>mīhng līhn</b> or <b>mīhng-lín</b> next year
<b>sīh</b> time	<b>gó(jahn)-sīh</b> or <b>gó(jahn)-sí</b> then <b>gauh(jahn)-sīh</b> or <b>gauh(jahn)-sí</b> in the past
<b>yùhn</b> currency	<b>Méih yùhn</b> or <b>Méih yún</b> American dollar <b>Yahŭ yùhn</b> or <b>Yahŭ yún</b> Japanese yen



<b>pàaih</b> period	<b>lí pàaih/gó pàaih</b> or <b>lí páai/gó páai</b> these days in those days
<b>pàaih</b> label	<b>mouh pàaih</b> or <b>mouh páai</b> fake brand <b>mihug pàaih</b> or <b>mihug páai</b> name brand <b>mihug páai</b> name tag (with obligatory tone change)

The changed tone forms of these terms such as currencies are used especially by professionals to whom they are very familiar. This reflects the association of changed tones with familiarity.

## Changed tone due to contraction

The high rising changed tone also occurs as a result of contraction:

- In expressions involving contraction of **yāt** 'one', the combination of a level tone and the high tone of **yāt** results in the high rising tone:

**sí yāt sí** → **sí-sí** have a try

**bín yāt bín** → **bín-bín** have a change

**yāt go yāt go** → **yāt gó-go** one at a time

**yāt deui yāt deui** → **yāt déui-deui** one pair at a time

**yāt sīh yāt sīh** → **yāt sí-sīh** occasionally

**léng yāt léng** → **léng-léng**

**Go beisyū jeuk dou léng-léng gám heui hoi-wúí**

(lit. The secretary dresses pretty-pretty thus go meeting)

The secretary goes to meetings dressed up to the nines

- The perfective marker **jó** is sometimes dropped, leaving behind its rising tone (and a lengthened vowel) on the preceding verb:

**Fong-jó ga meih a?** → **Fóng' ga meih a?**

Have you started your holiday yet?

**Máaih-jó fái meih a?** → **Mái' fái meih a?**

Have you bought the tickets?

## Classifiers and changed tones

Here there is a rather systematic alternation between a low tone for the classifier and the changed tone when the same word appears as a noun or part of a compound noun:

	<i>Classifier</i>	<i>Noun</i>
<b>bohng</b> pound (weight)	<b>yāt bohng yuhk</b> a pound of meat	<b>yāt go hóng</b> a scale
<b>dihp</b> plate, disc	<b>yāt dihپ Choi</b> a dish of vegetables	<b>jek díp</b> a plate <b>dihp-lóuh chih-díp</b> computer disk
<b>doih</b> bag	<b>gái doih laahpsaap</b> a few bags of rubbish	<b>sán-dóih</b> handbag
<b>hahp</b> box	<b>léuhng hahp béng</b> two boxes of cakes	<b>go háp</b> the box
<b>pin</b> slice	<b>yāt pin tòhug</b> a piece of sugar cane	<b>ngòh-pín</b> sliced goose (a Chiu Chow speciality) <b>yùh-pín</b> slices of fish <b>cheung-pín</b> CD/record <b>miuh-pún</b> wash basin (but <b>fā-pún</b> container for plants)
<b>pùhn</b> basin	<b>sèhug pùhn séui</b> a basinful of water	<b>syàh-tíu</b> potato chip <b>yàuh-tíu</b> (a savoury elongated doughnut eaten with rice congee)
<b>tiuh</b> strip	<b>tiuh yú</b> fish	

## The high level changed tone

A second kind of tone change, much less common than the first, produces a high level tone. As with the high rising changed tone, it is usually the last syllable in a compound expression which is affected. The most frequently encountered examples involve kinship terms:

**múih** younger sister → **múi-múi** little sister (as an address term)  
**sújé** Miss → **jèh-jé** or **gá-jé** big sister

**daaih-ngáahn-múi** big-eyed girl  
**dākyi-múi** cute girl, cutie  
**daaih-luhk mui** mainland girl  
**bān-múi** Filipina girl (used of domestic helpers)

These forms are colloquial and tend to be pejorative – they often occur with the classifier **tiuh** as in **gó tiuh lēng-múi** ‘that lass’. Other sporadic cases include:

**fiing** spritely, versatile → **jīng-ling** shrewd, clever  
**méi** last → **daih méi** the last, **bān méi** come last (as in an exam)  
**láhug** cold → **lāaugsām** sweater, **yehlāam** second-hand goods

In many cases this change is optional:

yauh-paaí or yauh-pāai	right-wing party
yihgā or yīgā	now
gām-máahn or gām-māan	tonight

In a few cases either the high rising or the high level changed tone may be used:

yāt go yàhn one person, but yāt go yán/yān alone, all by oneself  
 Kéuih yāt go yān lèuh hái Hēunggóng  
 She stays in Hong Kong all on her own

Further cases of the high level changed tone arise in baby talk:

hóu yáih → hóu yāi, yāi-yāi naughty

When **daaih** 'big' changes to high level **dāai**, the opposite meaning obtains:

Kéuih dāk gam dāai, joun dāk dī māt a? (from a Cantonese soap opera)  
 She's so small, what can she do?

Léih dāai-dāai go góján jauh heui gwo Méihgwok ge la  
 When you were little, you had been to the United States

### Exercise 3.1

Add the tone change in the following forms where applicable.

- 1 chau smelly → \_\_\_\_\_ -**déi** rather smelly
- 2 laahn broken → \_\_\_\_\_ -**déi** a bit broken
- 3 waaih broken → \_\_\_\_\_ -**déi** not working very well
- 4 guih tired → \_\_\_\_\_ -**déi** a bit tired
- 5 lyuhn messy → \_\_\_\_\_ -**déi** rather messy
- 6 chéuhng long → \_\_\_\_\_ -**déi** rather long
- 7 lèuhng cool → \_\_\_\_\_ -**déi** rather cool
- 8 hàhn itchy → \_\_\_\_\_ -**déi** rather itchy
- 9 làhn tender, soft → \_\_\_\_\_ -**déi** rather tender, soft
- 10 lùhng deaf → \_\_\_\_\_ -**déi** a bit deaf
- 11 laaht spicy hot → \_\_\_\_\_ -**déi** rather spicy hot
- 12 mihng understand → \_\_\_\_\_ -**déi** understand a little (not fully understand)

- 13 **jī** know → \_\_\_\_\_ **-děi** know a little (about something)  
 14 **gwōng** bright → \_\_\_\_\_ **-děi** rather bright  
 15 **sīn** slippery → \_\_\_\_\_ **-děi** rather slippery

### Exercise 3.2

Apply the high rising tone change to the following:

Example: **gūng-tàuh** head worker → **gūng-táu** foreman

A: obligatory tone change

- 1 **gong-tiuh** steel bar → \_\_\_\_\_  
 2 **hói-meih** dry seafood → \_\_\_\_\_  
 3 **gauh līh** last year → \_\_\_\_\_  
 4 **tóí-miuh** table surface → \_\_\_\_\_  
 5 **ōnchyùh**-**daai** safety belt → \_\_\_\_\_  
 6 **tō-hàih** slippers → \_\_\_\_\_  
 7 **goklōk-tàuh** corner → \_\_\_\_\_  
 8 **máaih làuh** buy a flat → \_\_\_\_\_  
 9 **taaiyèuhng** **ngáah**-**geng** sunglasses → \_\_\_\_\_  
 10 **Hēu****gógoug-deih**, (**yàh** **dō**, **chē dō**) (*lit.* Hong Kong land, many people, many cars) → \_\_\_\_\_

B: optional tone change

- 11 **sānmàh** news → \_\_\_\_\_  
 12 **gójahu** then → \_\_\_\_\_  
 13 **gójahu-sih** then → \_\_\_\_\_  
 14 **diht lohk deih** fall on the ground → \_\_\_\_\_  
 15 **yáuh yāt pàaih** (**móuh gin**) (I haven't seen you) for some time → \_\_\_\_\_  
 16 **sān-lèuhng** bride → \_\_\_\_\_  
 17 **sān-lòhng** bridegroom → \_\_\_\_\_  
 18 **sī-daih** fellow student (of the same teacher) → \_\_\_\_\_  
 19 **dá mǎhjeuk** play mahjong → \_\_\_\_\_  
 20 **boujī tauhtiuh** newspaper headline → \_\_\_\_\_

### Exercise 3.3

Choose the appropriate pronunciation of classifier vs. noun

- 1 Ngóh bŭn-jó géi go \_\_\_\_\_ (hahp/háp) heui sŕn ũk  
I moved a few boxes to the new house
- 2 Kéuih daai-jó yŕt \_\_\_\_\_ (tŭnh/tún) jyunsehk génglŭn  
She wore a diamond necklace
- 3 Jek mŕau dá laahŭ-jó géi jek \_\_\_\_\_ (dŭhp/díp)  
The cat broke a few dishes
- 4 Léih kéih séuhŭ go \_\_\_\_\_ (bohng/bóng) bohng-háh lá  
Stand on the scale to measure your weight
- 5 Ngóh jŭngyi sihk sŭchoi yahk \_\_\_\_\_ (pŭn/pún) faahŭ  
I like sliced pork with rice and seasonal vegetables
- 6 Ngóh giu-jó yŕt \_\_\_\_\_ (dŭhp/díp) lóuh-ngó  
I've ordered a dish of marinated goose (a Chiu Chow speciality)
- 7 Cheui-bŭk-bŭk ge syŕh \_\_\_\_\_ (tŭnh/tún) jeui hóu-sihk  
Crispy chips taste the best
- 8 Liuh Síujé daai-jó géi \_\_\_\_\_ (hahp/háp) bŕng làih  
Miss Liu has brought a few boxes of cake along
- 9 Tóí seuhngbiŭh yáuh \_\_\_\_\_ (pŭnh/pún) séuisŕn-fŕ  
There are some daffodils in a basin on the table
- 10 Mgŭi bŕi go \_\_\_\_\_ (pŭnh/pún) ngóh ă  
Please give me a tray (as in a fast food buffet)

### Exercise 3.4

Apply the high level changed tone to the following:

optional tone change

- 1 tiug-mŕahu tomorrow evening → \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 pòhpó grandma → \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 séi-ngaahng-paai die-hards → \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 goklohk corner → \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 lŕuih-lŕui little girl → \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 móuh géi lohŭ not too long → \_\_\_\_\_

obligatory tone change

- 7 hŕuughá-múi country girl → \_\_\_\_\_
- 8 mŕuh-mŕuh gŭngjái furry toy animal → \_\_\_\_\_
- 9 ngŕahŭ-yŕp-mŕuh eyelashes → \_\_\_\_\_
- 10 sŕuji-méih last finger → \_\_\_\_\_

# UNIT FOUR

## Reduplication

Reduplication involves repeating a syllable according to a certain pattern. The effect depends on what is being reduplicated – nouns, adjectives, etc. – sometimes making the meaning of the word more vivid, sometimes attenuating it. Many of the patterns involve a changed tone, like the reduplicated adjectives with **-dái** discussed in Unit 3 (see also *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 9). Intermediate learners should recognize the main patterns and their implications. At a more advanced stage they may try to make up their own reduplicated forms, although this can be somewhat hit and miss since the processes of reduplication are not entirely predictable.

### ABB adjectives

A number of adjectives are made more vivid by the addition of a reduplicated syllable (sometimes meaningful in its own right, but often not):

#### i Colour terms

<b>hāk</b> black, dark	<b>hāk-māng-māng</b> or <b>hāk-mā-mā</b> pitch dark
<b>baahk</b> white	<b>baahk-syūt-syūt</b> white as snow ( <i>syūt</i> )
<b>hùhng</b> red	<b>hùhng-dōng-dohng</b> red (as in clothes) or <b>hùhng-bōk-bōk</b> rosy (as in cheeks)
<b>chēng</b> light green	<b>chēng-hī-hī</b> too green, unripe
<b>wòhng</b> yellow	<b>wòhng-gàhm-gàhm</b> yellowed (as in lecture notes, skin)

#### ii Size and dimension

<b>feih</b> fat	<b>feih-tàhn-tàhn</b> fatty or <b>feih-dyut-dyut</b> chubby
<b>sau</b> thin	<b>sau-máng-máng</b> slim (of people)
<b>ngái</b> short	<b>ngái-dāt-dāt</b> short, stocky (of people)

<b>bòhk</b> thin	<b>bòhk-chít-chít</b> thin (of clothes, paper, etc.)
<b>chèuhng</b> long	<b>chèuhng-làaih-làaih</b> (over) long
<b>bín</b> flat	<b>bín-teht-teht</b> flat (surface)
<b>maht</b> dense	<b>maht-ját-ját</b> cramped, crowded
<b>yùhn</b> round	<b>yùhn-lùk-lùk/yùhn-dàhm-dàhm/yùhn-dàhm-dèuh</b> rounded

## III Taste

<b>cheui</b> crisp	<b>cheui-bòk-bòk</b> crispy
<b>syūn</b> sour	<b>syūn-měi-měi</b> on the sour side
<b>tíhm</b> sweet	<b>tíhm-yèh-yèh</b> too sweet, sickly
<b>táahm</b> bland	<b>táahm-mauh-mauh</b> too bland, tasteless

These forms are used as expressive adjectives:

**Kéuih sé dī jīh maht-ját-ját ge**  
The characters he writes are cramped

**Kéuih jyú dī sung táahm-mauh-mauh ge**  
The food he cooks is too bland

Two or more such forms can be combined to paint a vivid picture, for example:

**Go bìhbi hóu dākyl, fèih-dyūt-dyūt, baahk-syūt-syūt**  
The baby is pretty, chubby and white as snow

**Faai mihn yùhn-lùk-lùk hūng-bòk-bòk**  
Her face is rounded and rosy

## AAB verbs and adverbs

Most of these expressions exist only in reduplicated form:

**gáau-gáau-jan** meddle (\***gáau-jan** does not exist)  
**tàhn-tán-jan** shake (\***tàhn-jan** does not exist)  
**jihng-jíng-gāi** or **jihng-gāi-gāi** quietly, secretly (\***jihng-gāi** does not exist)  
**kàhm-chēng** → **kàhm-kám-chēng** in a hurry

These forms serve as predicates and/or adverbs:

**Ngóh gínggou léih, nhóm joi gáan-gáan-jan la**  
I warn you, don't meddle any more

**Léih káhnkám-chéng gwo máhlonh, gón-jyuh heui bín a?**  
You crossed the street in such a hurry, where are you going to?

**Kéuih meih hoi yáhn wái janh jilung-jóng-gái ján-jó**  
(*lit.* she not yet finish meeting then quietly-quietly left)  
She quietly left before the end of the meeting

## AABB adjectives and adverbs

Words consisting of two syllables are reduplicated by repeating each syllable in the pattern AABB:

<b>daaih-fōng</b>	graceful	→ <b>daaih-daaih-fōng-fōng</b>	elegant, graceful(ly)
<b>sī-màhn</b>	refined	→ <b>sī-sī-màhn-màhn</b>	gentlemanly
<b>sei-fōng</b>	square	→ <b>sei-sei-fōng-fōng</b>	rather square
<b>sih-daahn</b>	indifferent	→ <b>sih-sih-daahn-daahn</b>	rather indifferent(ly)
<b>kành-kèih</b>	casual	→ <b>kành-kành-kèih-kèih</b>	casually
<b>faai-cheni</b>	quickly	→ <b>faai-faai-cheui-cheui</b>	nice and quickly

These forms may also serve as adverbs (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 10):

**A-Lìhng kành-kành-kèih-kèih ga-jó go gwáijái**  
Ling casually got married to a foreign boy

**Ngóhdeih faai-faai-cheui-cheui gáan-dihm lí dāan sáangyi lá**  
Let's get this business deal over and done with quickly

Such reduplication applied to directional verbs gives a meaning of repetition:

<b>séuhng-séuhng-lohk-lohk</b>	go up and down
<b>héi-héi-dit-dit</b>	rise and fall
<b>chēut-chent-yahp-yahp</b>	come in and out

**Kénih ge yāt sāng héi-héi-dit-dit, haaih paak hei ge hóu tàihchòih**  
Her life is full of ups and downs; it is good material for a film



**Lī go deihdín hóu fōughih; hóu dô yàuhhaak chēut-chēut-yahp-yahp**  
 This location is convenient, many tourists come in and out of this place

As with the ABB forms above, two or more AABB adjectives or adverbs can be combined to give a particularly vivid impression:

**Gwōng-máahng** bright → **gwōng-gwōng-máahng-máahng** nice and bright

**fut-lohk** spacious → **fut-fut-lohk-lohk** pleasantly spacious

**Gáan sán ùk gwōng-gwōng-máahng-máahng fut-fut-lohk-lohk**  
 The new house is nice and bright and spacious

**Jūk léih gihh-gihh-hōng-hōng faai-fai-lohk-lohk**  
 (*lit.* wish you healthy-healthy happy-happy)  
 Wishing you health and happiness

## Onomatopoeic expressions

Reduplication commonly appears in onomatopoeic expressions, with tone change of the second syllable where applicable (see Unit 3). Typically these include the noun **sēng** meaning 'voice' or 'sound':

**kàh-ká-sēng** or **hā-hā-sēng** (as in laughing)

**mā-má-sēng** (as in scolding, rebuking)

**mē-mē-sēng** bleating (sheep)

**wāng-wāng-sēng** buzzing (bees)

**guhk-gúk-sēng** or **gohk-gók-sēng** crowing (cock)

**gwàhng-gwáng-sēng** (usually construction noise, as in remodelling a house)

**lòhm-lóm-sēng** (any big noise as in a construction site)

Many of these onomatopoeic expressions are used as predicates or as adverbs:

**jih-jàhm** → **jihjī-jàhmjàhm** (usually in chatting secretly)

**Kéuihdeih sèngyáht jīhjī-jàhmjàhm; fāahm séi yàhn la**  
 They're always chatting in a low voice; it's very annoying

**jī-jū** → **jījī-jājā** (talking noisily like birds chirping)

**Dī hohksāang yātjón jījī-jājā háidohk kīnggái**  
 (*lit.* the students early chirping here chatting)  
 The students are chatting away every morning

Some of these forms have an adverbial meaning unrelated to sound, as in **lōk-lōk-sēng** or **lāak-lāak-sēng** (fluently), **lāh-lá-sēng** and **jāh-já-sēng** (quickly)

**Kéuih Yingmán hón lēk ga; góng don lāak-lāak-sēng**

Her English is very good; she can speak it fluently

**Ngóh séung lāh-lá-sēng jouh saai dī yéh**

I want to finish the work quickly

**Kéuih jāh-já-sēng sé yùhn fūng seun, sahþ fānjūng dōu msái**

She finished writing the letter quickly and it didn't even take ten minutes

## Reduplication in baby-talk register

As in other languages, reduplication is a feature of the baby talk used between parents and small children. The baby-talk forms often resemble the adult ones, as in the case of ABB forms with verb and reduplicated object:

**yám-lāai** drink milk → **yám-lāai-lāai**

**yám-séui** drink water → **yám-séui-séui**

**sái-mihn** wash one's face → **sái-mihu-mihu**

**maat-mihn** wipe one's face → **maat-mihn-mihn**

**baahn-leng** make oneself up → **baahu-leng-leng**

**chūng-lèuhng** have a shower → **chūng-lèuhug-lèuhug**

Other baby-talk expressions are used only in ABB forms:

**sihk** eat → **sihk mūm-mūm**

cat

**ō** excrete → **ō-syùh-syùh/ō-syùh-syú**

pee, go wee-wee

**sái** wash → **sái-baahk-baahk**

wash oneself clean

**buhk** ambush → **buhk-lēi-lēi**

play hide and seek

## Exercise 4.1

Reduplicate the adjective to give a vivid impression (note that **hóu** is not normally used with reduplicated adjectives).

Example: **Kéuih go jéfū hóu sī-màhu**

Her brother in law is gentlemanly

→ **Kéuih go jéfū sī-sī-màhn-màhn**

nice and gentlemanly

- |    |  |   |
|----|--|---|
| 1  | <b>Gāu ūk hōu kéihléih</b>                     | The house is orderly                    |
| 2  | <b>Go léui hōu baahk-jehng</b>                 | The daughter is fair (in complexion)    |
| 3  | <b>Tou hei hōu pótūng</b>                      | The film was ordinary                   |
| 4  | <b>Ngóhdeih ūkkéi hōu yihlāauh</b>             | Our home is lively                      |
| 5  | <b>Gó gāu hohkhaauh hōu séi-bāu</b>            | The school is strict (inflexible)       |
| 6  | <b>Lóuháau gāmyaht hōu mángjáng</b>            | Today the boss is impatient, frustrated |
| 7  | <b>Go diksí sīgēi hōn chōulóuh</b>             | The taxi driver is rude                 |
| 8  | <b>Kéuih go jái hōn gōndaaih</b>               | Her son is big and tall                 |
| 9  | <b>Ngóh fahn gūng hōu ōndihng</b>              | My job is stable                        |
| 10 | <b>Gó go móhugkàuh mihngsiug hōu daaih-jek</b> | The tennis star is well-built           |

## Exercise 4.2

Add a reduplicated adverb to the sentence based on the adjective provided.

Example: **Kéuihdeih lèih-fāu (chèuih-bín casual)** They got divorced  
 → **Kéuihdeih chèuih-chèuih-bín-bín lèih-fāu**  
 They casually got divorced

- Kéuih saihou daapying wàahn chin (hàhm-wùh vague)**  
His brother promised to return the money (vaguely)
- Kéuihdeih bouji sán ūk (gáandān simple)**  
They're decorating the new house (simply)
- Kéuih fuhmóuh yéuhng daaih kéuih (sānfú endure hardship)**  
His parents brought him up (with much hardship)
- Ni gān gūngsí syāmbou pochān (jingsik formally)**  
This company declared itself bankrupt (formally)
- Ngóh hēimohng léih dāhk-syū (kàhnlèihk diligently)**  
I hope you will study (hard)
- Kéuih gót saai dī gyán (hingsāng relax)**  
She marked all the papers (in a relaxed manner)
- Jūk léih ló dóu bohk-wái (seunlèihk smoothly)**  
Hope you get the degree (smoothly)
- Dáng ngóh gáaisik bēi léih tēng (chèuhng-sai detailed)**  
Let me explain to you (in a detailed manner)

### Exercise 4.3

Choose a suitable onomatopoeic form to modify the verb phrase

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 _____ haam cry                                     | a gwàhng-gwáng-sēng banging noise           |
| 2 _____ jìhgéi tùhng jìhgéi góug yéh talk to oneself | b jī-jī-jā-jā chirping                      |
| 3 _____ siu laugh                                    | c buhk-búk-sēng pulsing                     |
| 4 _____ góug hàahu-wá gossip                         | d jìh-jī-jàhm-jàhm quietly chit-chatting    |
| 5 _____ góug beihmaht talk secrets                   | e àhm-àhm-chàhm-chàhm talking to oneself    |
| 6 _____ jōngsāu remodel                              | f wā-wā-sēng crying noise                   |
| 7 _____ laauh go jái scold the son                   | g kàh-ká-sēng chuckling noise               |
| 8 _____ sām tiu heart beating                        | h mǎ-mǎ-sēng rebuking                       |
| 9 _____ heui tàuhsou go to complain                  | i bàh-bá-sēng flowing out in great quantity |
| 10 _____ làuh hyut bleeding                          | j ngàhng-ngáng-sēng mumbling                |

### Exercise 4.4

Reduplicate both the adjectives to give a vivid impression of the situation.

Example: Ngóh sèhngyaht dōu hóu hōisām, hóu gihnōng

I'm always happy and healthy

→ Ngóh sèhngyaht dōu hōi-hōi-sām-sām,  
gihn-gihn-hōng-hōng

- Kéuihdeih hóu chānmaht, hóu yīugahn**  
They're very close and intimate
- Gó go làhmyán hóu sàhnbei, hóu gwáisyú**  
That guy is mysterious and stealthy
- Ngóh lóuhgūng hóu sìhngsaht, hóu táanbaahk**  
My husband is honest and frank
- Nī go jokgá sé ge yéh hóu hūngduhng, hóu kèihgwaaí**  
The stuff written by this author is empty and strange
- Kéuih go yéung hóu yìhmsák, hóu láahng-ugouh**  
He looks serious, cold and arrogant
- Gān ūk hóu gōnjehng, hón jīngchàih**  
The house is nice and clean, neat and tidy
- Léih go léuih-pàhngyáuh hóu simàhn, hóu daaih-fōng**  
Your girlfriend is gentle and graceful
- Kéuih gān seuihfóng hóu syūfuhk, hóu hōiyèuhng**  
Her bedroom is cosy and open

- 9 Léih go beisyū hōu mǎfū, hōu fūhlūk  
Your secretary is sloppy and irresponsible
- 10 Ngóh sailóm hōu gúwǎahk, hōu gwái-máh  
My brother is cunning and tricky

### Exercise 4.5

Choose one of the ABB adjectives/adverbs (or two where specified) for each sentence.

- |   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1 Kénih dĩ tàuhfaat Her hair _____  | a yūh-lūk-lūk roundish                |
| 2 Kéuih hàahng-louh She walks _____   | b tsáhm-mauh-mauh tasteless           |
| 3 Go bō The ball _____  | c waah-t-lyūt-lyūt soft               |
| 4 Dī geijé mahn dou kéuih The reporters questioned him till _____   | d ngàh-chaat-chaat proud, bragging    |
| 5 Léih sèhngyaht lyún góng-yéh You always talk nonsense _____ gám   | e yíht-laht-laht piping hot           |
| 6 Gó go hohksāang sèhngjūk hóu hóu, sèhngyaht That student's marks are very good and he often brags _____ | f háu-ngá-ngá speechless              |
| 7 Dihp choi The vegetables _____,   | g baahk-syūt-syūt white, fair         |
| 8 Gauh jyūyuhk The pork _____, _____  | h ngohng-gēul-gēul stupid             |
| 9 Kéuih dĩ pèihfū Complexion _____,   | i wū-jēut-jēut dark, shiny            |
| _____   | j fèih-tàhn-tàhn fat                  |
| 10 Dī hóisim The seafood _____, _____   | k maahn-tān-tān slowly                |
|   | l yàuh-lahm-lahm oily                 |
|   | m gūm-jāng-jāng very dry              |
|   | n hēung-pan-pan fragrant, smells nice |

# UNIT FIVE

## Word formation

Apart from reduplication, new words are formed largely by compounding – juxtaposition of morphemes – and a small number of prefixes and suffixes.

### Forming nouns

In forming compound nouns the modifying words come before the noun itself, much as they do in English:

People:

i Attributes modifying **yàhn** 'person'

**hóu-yàhn** good, nice person

**kùhng-yàhn** poor person

**chūngmihng-yàhn** clever person

**daaih-chihng-yàhn** great lover

**Oujāu-yàhn** Australian (person)

**Yidaaihleih-yàhn** Italian

**waaih-yàhn** bad person, villain

**yáuh-chín-yàhn** rich person

**chéun-yàhn** stupid person

**daaih-méih-yàhn** great beauty

**Méihgwok-yàhn** American

**Sâijohng-yàhn** Tibetan

ii The suffix **-lón** for males tends to have a pejorative connotation, referring prototypically to middle-aged, dishevelled, rough and rugged-looking men.

**chāai-lón** policeman

**chaahk-lón** thief

**fūngséui-lón** fung shui consultant

**biutaai-lón** pervert

**jongsau-lón** decorator

**gei-lón** homosexual

**sāu-máaih-lón** collector of used goods

**baahkfán-lón** drug (e.g. heroin) addict

**jeuijáu-lóu** drunkard  
**chísín-lóu** crazy guy  
**feih-lóu** fatty

**hàahmsáp-lóu** lecherous man  
**sēui-lóu** bad guy  
**waht-daht-lóu** gross guy

The suffix **-pòh** or its changed tone form **pó** provide a female counterpart of **lóu**, though less widely used:

**chāai-pòh** policewoman  
**baat-pòh** busybody

**maaih-choi-pó** (woman) vegetable vendor  
**mùih-yàhn-pòh** matchmaker

**-jái** and its female counterparts **-léui** and **-múi** have a diminutive meaning, also denoting familiarity:

**dá-gūng-jái** worker  
**Yahthún-jái** Japanese guy  
**fā-léui** flower girl, bridesmaid  
**gwái-lóu** foreigner  
**gwái-jái** foreign boy

**suhkhaak-jái** familiar customer  
**Taai(gwok)-múi** Thai girl  
**fā-jái** flower boy, page  
**gwái-pòh** foreign woman  
**gwái-múi** foreign girl

Food terms provide nice illustrations of how compound nouns are formed. Note how all modifiers precede the noun:

**jyū-yuhk** pork  
**baahk-choi** pak choy  
**muhk-gwā** papaya  
**chā-siu-bāau** pork bun

**ngàuh-yuhk** beef  
**tūng-choi** water spinach  
**chēng-gwā** cucumber  
**tàihjī-bāau** raisin bun

**Hóilàahm gāi-faahn**  
 Hainanese chicken rice

**yuhk-sī cháau mihn**  
 fried noodles with shredded pork

Technical terminology:

**jīseun fōgeih**  
**yàhngūng jilāhng**  
**chín-líh chūhng**  
**díhnlóuh gwōng-díp**  
**sou-máh séung-gēi**  
**hauh-yihndoih jyúyí**

information technology (IT)  
 artificial intelligence (AI)  
 the millennium bug  
 CD/CD-ROM  
 digital camera  
 Postmodernism

A special set of compounds are formed by juxtaposing opposites:

**dō** many + **síu** few → **dō-síu** amount  
**gōu** tall + **dāi** low → **gōu-dāi** height  
**chēuhng** long + **dyún** short → **chēuhng-dyún** length

For example:

**Dohk-háh gōu-dāi tūhugmàaih chèuhng-dyún**  
Measure the height and length

A similar type combines two kinship terms to form collective nouns:

<b>jái</b> son + <b>léui</b> daughter	→	<b>jái-léui</b> children
<b>hūng</b> elder + <b>daih</b> younger brother	→	<b>hūngdaih</b> brothers
<b>fuh</b> father + <b>jí</b> son (formal)	→	<b>fuhjí</b> father and son
<b>lóuhgūng</b> husband + <b>lóuhpòh</b> wife	→	<b>(léuhng) gūngpó</b> husband and wife (colloquial)

Note how these forms are used with **léuhng** 'two' or other numerals:

**Kéuihdeih léuhng fuhjí hóu chih-yéung**  
The two of them, father and son look very much alike

**Ngóhdeih léuhng gūngpó chaang tóí-geuk**  
(lit. we two, husband and wife, are upholding table legs)  
The two of us, husband and wife, are having a private meal

**Kéuihdeih sāam hūngdaih háidouh jāang yuhug dihulóuh**  
The three brothers are fighting for the use of the computer

## Abbreviations

Longer names of companies, etc., are often abbreviated by combining the first syllable of each component word:

<b>Yiug-gwok Hòhng-hūng Gūngsī</b>	British Airways → <b>Ying-Hòhng</b> BA
<b>Sīng-ga-bō Hòhng-hūng Gūngsī</b>	Singapore Airlines → <b>Sing-Hòhng</b> SIA
<b>Fō-geih daaih-bohk</b>	The University of Science and Technology → <b>Fō-daaih</b> HKUST
<b>Háhugsāng jísou</b>	The Hang Seng index (Hong Kong stock index) → <b>Hahng-jí</b> the HSI
<b>Jungwàh dihulihk</b>	China Light and Power → <b>Jūng-dih</b> China Light
<b>Sjī-saan Senihdouh</b>	Lion Rock Tunnel → <b>Si-Senih</b> LRT



Sometimes, however, the second syllable is selected to give a more satisfactory abbreviation, as with **Hèunggóng** becoming **Góng**:

<b>Hèunggóng daaih-hohk</b>	Hong Kong University → <b>Góng-daaih</b> HKU
<b>Hèunggóng sím-jé</b>	Miss Hong Kong → <b>Góng-jé</b> Miss HK
<b>hung-jung sín-jé</b>	female flight attendant → <b>hūng-jé</b>

Idiomatic abbreviations:

**sáutàih dihnwá** (*lit.* hand-carry phone, i.e. mobile phone) → **sáutàih**  
**Yáuh sih jauh áá ngóh go sáutàih lá**  
 If there's anything, just call my mobile phone

## Forming adjectives

A number of adjectives form compounds:

**tāam-X** greedy for X:

<b>tāam-sām</b> greedy	<b>tāam-pèhng</b> greedy for bargains
<b>tāam-leug</b> vain	<b>tāam-chán</b> avaricious, miserly

**dái-X** worthy, deserving of X

<b>dái-sek</b> lovable	<b>dái-máaih</b> worth buying, good value
<b>dái-tái</b> worth seeing	<b>dái-laauh</b> in need of a scolding
<b>dái-wáan</b> worth playing	<b>dái-sihk</b> worth eating, good value (food)
<b>dái-séi</b> deserving to die	<b>dái-cháan</b> deserving to be fired (sacked)

**ngāam-X** right for X

<b>ngāam-sihk</b> good to eat	<b>ngāam-tēng</b> good-sounding, good to hear
<b>ngāam-yám</b> good to drink	<b>ngāam-tái</b> good to look at (or read)

**X-dāk** capable of X

<b>dá-dāk</b> good at fighting	<b>sihk-dāk</b> can eat a lot
<b>yám-dāk</b> can drink a lot	<b>wáan-dāk</b> capable of playing to the full
<b>fan-dāk</b> can sleep a lot	<b>ngàaih-dāk</b> able to endure hardship

Adjectives can readily be formed with **yáuh** and **móuh** (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 6):

**yáuh-méng** famous, renowned  
**yáuh-seunsām** confident

**móuh-fínfahn** untalented  
**móuh-heimohng** hopeless

## Forming verbs

Reflexive verbs and adjectives are formed with **jih** (as in **jihgái** oneself):

**jih-saah** commit suicide  
**jih-duhng** automatic

**jih-jin** recommend oneself  
**jih-yihng** confess, admit

A number of these verbs appear in the following example:

**Kéuh nī tou hei jih-pín, jih-dohh jih-yín, ló-jó Ousikā gāmjeuhng-jéung**

(lit. he this film self-script self-direct self-act got Oscar award)

He wrote, directed and acted in this film himself and received an Oscar

**tāu** 'steal' forms verbs denoting surreptitious activities:

**tāu-tēng** eavesdrop

**tāu-tái** peep

**tāu-wahn** smuggle

**tāu-siu** smile secretly

**tāu-gái (jáu)** sneak away  
 early, shirk

**tāu-sihk** snatch something to eat

**tāu-yam** copy (books, etc.) illegally

**tāu-yíng** take secret photographs

**tāu-dohh** cross illegally (into a country)

**tāu-láahn** snatch the opportunity to be  
 lazy

See also Unit 6 on verb-object compounds.

## Exercise 5.1

Add a modifier to specify the kind of food you prefer.

Example: **tōng** soup → **syūn-laaht-tōng** hot and sour soup

1 **faahn** rice

2 **sāléut** salad

3 **mihn** noodles

4 **yuhk** meal

a **gōukoi** high calcium; **dāiji** low fat

b **fèih** fat; **sau** lean

c **luhk** green; **lihngmūng** lemon

d **sūkmáih** corn; **fāsāng** peanut

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 5 <b>lái</b> h milk         | c <b>yú</b> t moon; <b>sāi</b> western                      |
| 6 <b>fán</b> (rice) noodles | f <b>chāsū</b> barbecued pork; <b>lūn-yàhng</b> lotus paste |
| 7 <b>chà</b> h tea          | g <b>cháam</b> fried; <b>loh-mái</b> h sticky rice          |
| 8 <b>yàuh</b> oil           | h <b>sāangwó</b> fruit; <b>jaahp-choi</b> mixed vegetable   |
| 9 <b>béng</b> cake          | i <b>yùhdáan</b> fishball; <b>ngàh-yún</b> beef ball        |
| 10 <b>hāu</b> bun           | j <b>chōu</b> broad; <b>yam</b> thin; <b>cháam</b> fried    |

## Exercise 5.2

Form adjectives with **yáuh/móuh** as cued, based on the noun given.

Example: **haauhléut** efficiency → **yáuh-haauhléut** efficient

- 1 **yi**yíh meaning → \_\_\_\_\_ meaningful
- 2 **líu** substance → \_\_\_\_\_ vacuous
- 3 **mahntàih** problem → \_\_\_\_\_ problematic
- 4 **loihsing** patience → \_\_\_\_\_ impatient
- 5 **bánmeih** taste → \_\_\_\_\_ tasteful
- 6 **lèuhngsām** conscience → \_\_\_\_\_ unscrupulous
- 7 **lei**h profit → \_\_\_\_\_ advantageous
- 8 **yùhnjāk** principle → \_\_\_\_\_ unprincipled
- 9 **haahn** boundary → \_\_\_\_\_ limited
- 10 **jaakyahm-gám** responsibility → \_\_\_\_\_ irresponsible

## Exercise 5.3

Form abbreviations from the following:

- 1 **Jūngwok ngàhnhòhng** Bank of China
- 2 **Dahkkéui Sánjéung** Chief Executive of the Special Administrative Region
- 3 **Máh-lòih-sái-a Hòhng-hūng-gūngsī** Malaysian Airlines
- 4 **Ajāu Dihnsih** Asia Television (ATV)
- 5 **Sāi-kéui Senihdohh** Western Harbour Tunnel
- 6 **Bākgīng Dazih-hohk** Beijing University
- 7 **Deih-hah Titlouh** Underground Railway
- 8 **Heunggóng Dihndāng** Hong Kong Electric

# UNIT SIX

## Verb-object compounds

An important set of phrases are known as verb-object compounds: compounds because they behave in some way as a single unit. Although containing an object, they often correspond to intransitive verbs in English:

<b>gaau-syū</b>	teach	<b>sīhk-faahn</b>	eat (a meal)
<b>duhk-syū</b>	study	<b>jyá-faahn</b>	cook (food)
<b>jouh-yéh</b>	work	<b>jā-chē</b>	drive (a car)
<b>yàuh-séui</b>	swim	<b>waahk-wá</b>	draw/paint (a picture)
<b>dá-jih</b>	type	<b>cheung-gō</b>	sing (a song)
<b>dá-dihnwá</b>	telephone	<b>béi-chín</b>	pay (money)

With these verbs the object is usually not translated:

<b>Ngóh mēh sīk jō-chē</b>	I don't know how to drive (a car)
<b>Yáuh yàhn háidouh cheung-gō</b>	Someone's singing (songs)
<b>Dáng ngóh béi chin lá</b>	Let me pay (the money)
<b>Ngóh go jái jūngyi waahk-wá</b>	My son likes to draw (pictures)
<b>Gám máahn bīngō jyú-faahn a?</b>	Who's cooking (the food) tonight?
<b>Léih yiu sé-senn heui seui-gúk</b>	You have to write (a letter) to the tax office

The word **yéh** (thing; stuff) comes in handy here as a generic object which can be used with many verbs:

<b>Ngóhdeih heui yám-yéh</b>	We're going for a drink
<b>Léih mhóu góng-yéh jyuh</b>	Don't speak yet
<b>Kéuih yauh háidouh baahn-yéh</b>	He's pretending again
<b>Mhóu hái ngóh mihn chūhn wáan-yéh</b>	Don't put on a show in front of me ( <i>lit.</i> play things)

With some verbs of this kind there is no way to translate the object at all:

<b>git-fān</b>	get married	<b>fan-gaan</b>	sleep
<b>dihng-fān</b>	become engaged	<b>tin-mónh</b>	dance
<b>lèih-fāu</b>	get divorced	<b>tin-síng</b>	skip

The aspect marker or verbal particle comes between the verb and the object, just as it would in the case of a regular object:

<b>Kéuih lóuhbáan cháh-jó-jūk</b>	His boss has resigned
<b>Go heisyúdá-gán-dihnwá</b>	The secretary is talking on the phone
<b>Ngóh di páhngyáuh king-gán-gái</b>	My friends are chatting
<b>Kéuih meih duhk-gwo-syū</b>	He has not studied before
<b>Ngóh juhng meih gaau-yáhn-syū</b>	I have not finished teaching

This contrasts with other verbs which happen to have two syllables (but do not contain an object), where the aspect marker comes at the end:

<b>Ngóh gáaisik-jó hóu loi</b>	I explained for a long time
<b>Nī go gaiwaahk fautjín-jó géi lín</b>	This project has developed for some years
<b>Kéuih wáaihyih-gwo jhngéi ge lánghlkh</b>	He has doubted his own ability
<b>Kéuih túhng yáhnhaak gaaisinh-gán di syū</b>	He's introducing the books to the guests

## Directional verb compounds

The directional verbs (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 15) also form verb-object compounds:

<b>séuhng-chê</b>	get off (a bus, etc.)	<b>lohk-chê</b>	get off (a bus, etc.)
<b>séuhng-tòhng</b>	go to class	<b>lohk-tòhng</b>	finish class
<b>fāau-gūng</b>	go to work	<b>fāau-hohk</b>	go to school
<b>chêut-fo</b>	sell goods, shares	<b>yáhp-fo</b>	buy goods, shares, etc.
<b>héi-sān</b>	get up	<b>gwo-sān</b>	pass away

## Modifying the object

It is often possible to insert a modifier between the verb and its object:

<b>fan-gaan</b> sleep	<b>Go bibbī yin fan ngaau gaau</b>
	The baby has to have an afternoon nap

	<b>Ngóh fau fāu go leng gaau sū</b> I'm going to have a nice sleep
<b>chūng-lèuhng</b> shower	<b>Léih yiu chūng go yíht séui lèuhng</b> You need to take a hot shower
<b>fa-joung</b> put on make up	<b>Kéuh yauh fa-jó go lèuhng jōng</b> She's put on loud make-up again

This can be puzzling since **gaau** in **fau-gaau**, for example, is not meaningful on its own, while **lèuhng** meaning 'cool' can hardly be modified by 'hot water'. In effect, the modifier applies to the whole action, in this case taking a shower. A classifier can also be added to indicate a specific event:

<b>síhk chāan faahn</b>	have a meal
<b>dá dō go dihnwá</b>	make another call
<b>tiu géi jek móuh</b>	have a few dances

In the phrase **wàhu-lohng** (*lit.* dizzy-wave) there is normally a modifier:

<b>wàhn-syùhn-lohng</b>	get seasick
<b>wàhn-chē-lohng</b>	get carsick
<b>wàhn-gēi-lohng</b>	get airsick
<b>wàhn-(saai)-daaih-lohng</b>	faint, go weak at the knees

## Inverted verb-object compounds

In several situations the verb-object 'compounds' may appear in inverted form or separated from each other. In such cases they preserve the meaning of the original compound:

i With **yáuh/móuh** (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 6):

<b>jouh-yéh</b> work → <b>yáuh yéh jouh</b>	have work to do
<b>tiu-móuh</b> dance → <b>yáuh móuh tiu</b>	there is dancing (to be done)
<b>duhk-syū</b> study → <b>móuh syū duhk</b>	have no opportunity to study
<b>fan-gaau</b> sleep → <b>móuh gaau hóm fan</b>	be unable to sleep properly

ii With topicalization (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 22), for example, given the verb-object compounds **duhk-syū** (study) and **fāu-hóhk** (attend school) we can topicalize the objects:

**Syū yauh nìh duhk, hóhk yauh nìh fāu**  
He doesn't study and doesn't go to school

Similarly, based on **git-fān** (to get married), the object **fān** can be made the topic of the sentence:

**Fān chhūi jōu dōu yiu git ge la**  
(lit. marriage sooner or later still have to close)  
You have to get married sooner or later

iii With **hāh ... dōu** 'even' (see Unit 9) to emphasize the object of the verb-object compound:

**Kéuih yihgā hāh gāi dōu mē séung hàahug**  
Now she doesn't even want to go out (**hàahug-gāi**)

**Ngóh go jái behug dou hān wá dōu mē séung waahk**  
My son is so sick that he doesn't even want to draw (**waahk-wá**)

**Léih mōhng dou hāu faahn dōu móuh sìhgaan sìhk àh?**  
Are you so busy that you have no time to eat? (**sìhk-faahu**)

## Exercise 6.1

Add the missing object where required:

- |   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1 Ngóhdeih yihgā heui sìhk _____              | We're going to eat now              |
| 2 Dī yām-ngohk lihng dou ngóh séung tiu _____ | The music makes me want to dance    |
| 3 Ngóh go jái jeni lēk haah waahk _____       | My son is best at drawing           |
| 4 Léih jeni hóu sé _____ bái kéuih            | You'd better write to him           |
| 5 Léih géisih bái _____ a?                    | When are you going to pay?          |
| 6 Ngóh juhng meih chūng _____                 | I haven't taken a shower yet        |
| 7 Singkèih-yaht msái fān _____                | No need to go to school on Sunday   |
| 8 Kéuih hóu jūngyi kīng _____                 | He likes to chat                    |
| 9 Gó behugyāhn yiu yahtyaht yāuh _____        | The patient needs to swim every day |
| 10 Kéuih sèhngyaht daaih-sēng cheung _____    | She always sings loudly             |

## Exercise 6.2

Add a suitable aspect marker or particle such as **jó**, **gáu**, **gwo** or **yùhn** to modify the verb-object phrase.

Example:

**Kéuih hái Gànàhdaaih gaau-syū**      He teaches in Canada  
 → **Kéuih hái Gànàhdaaih gaau-gwo-syū**      He has taught in Canada

- 1 **Kéuih māmih hái chynhóng jyú-faahn**      His mother is cooking in the kitchen
- 2 **Léih taaitái haih-mhaih faat-pèihhei a?**      Is your wife throwing her temper tantrums?
- 3 **Seuhng go láihbaai ngóh fong-ga**      Last week I took leave
- 4 **Kéuih hái Gimkuih duhk-syū**      He has studied at Cambridge before
- 5 **Ngóh hàahng-gūngsi jīhauh gokdāk hóu guih**      I felt tired after finishing shopping
- 6 **Léih géisih yám-jáu lèih a?**      When did you have a drink?
- 7 **Ngóh hóu loiuh móuh háau-sih la**      It's been a long time since I took an exam
- 8 **Dá-dihnwá fāan ūkkéi meih a?**      Have you called home yet?

## Exercise 6.3

Separate the object from the verb by making it the topic or focus of the sentence (see Unit 9).

Example: **Yátdihng yiu jéunsih gāau-seui**      One must pay taxes on  
 → **Seui yatdihng yiu jéunsih gāau**      time

- 1 **Kéuih nh sik gaau-syū**      He doesn't know how to teach
- 2 **Síngkèih-yaht dōm móuh dāk yāu-sik**      Even on Sundays there's no opportunity to rest
- 3 **Syúga ngóhdeih dōm móuh dāk fong-ga**      Even in summer we have no opportunity to take a holiday
- 4 **Kéuih taaitái yauh msái chau-jái, yauh msái fāan-gūng**      His wife doesn't need to take care of the kids or go to work
- 5 **Chih jōu dōm yim sāang-jái**      Sooner or later one has to have children
- 6 **Yauh nh daap-féigēi yauh nh jā-chē**      He won't take a plane or drive



- 7 **Kénih sāmchìng m̀h hóu, yauh m̀h sihk-faahn yauh m̀h fan-gaan**  
He's not in a good mood, doesn't eat or sleep
- 8 **Léih yauh m̀h sé-seun, yauh m̀h dá-dihnwá**  
You don't write or call
- 9 **Kéuih yauh m̀h fa-jōng yauh m̀h chēui-tàuh**  
She doesn't put on make up or style her hair

# UNIT SEVEN

## Adjectives and stative verbs

### Adjectives as verbs

Adjectives in Cantonese share several features with verbs. They can be used with aspect markers such as **jó**, **gwo** and **háh** (Unit 12) as well as verbal particles such as **fáan**, **saai**, **màaih** to indicate a change in the situation:

<b>Ngóh go jái jeníahn hōisām-jó</b>	My son has become happier lately
<b>Kéuih yíhgá hōisām fáan</b>	She's happy again now

The ways adjectives and verbs are questioned and negated are also alike:

<i>Adjective</i>		<i>Verb</i>	
<b>gwai-mh-gwai a?</b>	Is it expensive?	<b>Léih jáu-mh-jáu a?</b>	Are you leaving?
<b>mh gwai</b>	It's not expensive	<b>Ngóh mh jáu</b>	I'm not leaving

### Stative verbs

A number of words which describe a state of affairs are intermediate between verbs and adjectives. These are generally known as stative verbs. Some of the most common are:

<b>gánjēung</b> anxious	<b>suhk</b> familiar
<b>gēng</b> afraid	<b>chūngchó</b> clear
<b>ngāam</b> right	<b>mòhng</b> busy
<b>sihamouh</b> envious	<b>douhgeih</b> jealous

Like adjectives, stative verbs enter into a range of comparative constructions (see Unit 13):

<b>Jéui gánjēung hāih léih</b>	You're the most nervous
--------------------------------	-------------------------

<b>Léih juhng chingchó gwo ngóh</b>	You know even more than I do
<b>Ngóh tühng kéuih suhk di</b>	I know her better
<b>Gám yéuhng ngāam di</b>	This way is more appropriate

They also behave like adjectives in other respects, such as reduplication (see Unit 4):

<b>ching-chó</b> clear	→ <b>ching-ching-chó-chó</b>	nice and clear
<b>suhk</b> familiar	→ <b>suhk-suk-déi</b>	somewhat familiar

Although behaving in many ways like adjectives, some stative verbs can nevertheless take an object like transitive verbs:

<b>Kéuih hóu gánjéung di jáiléui</b>	She's anxious about the children
<b>Ngóh hóu chingchó nǐ gihn sih</b>	I'm very clear about this matter (understand it well)
<b>Ngóhdeih hóu suhk kéuihdeih</b>	We're familiar with them (know them well)
<b>Ngāam saai di léuihjái</b>	Just right for the girls
<b>Léih jeuihahn mōhng mǎtyéh a?</b>	What have you been busy with recently?
<b>Ngóh sihnmoeh léih, yauh douhgeih léih</b>	I'm both envious and jealous of you

This transitive use of what appear to be adjectives is especially prevalent in colloquial language:

<b>Kénih mtóh léih</b>	He finds you disagreeable
<b>Kéuih sèhngyaht yúh jihgéi di pàhngyánh</b>	He always embarrasses his own friends
<b>Lóuhbāan hàahmsāp-gwo kéuih</b>	The boss has sexually harrassed her
<b>Go léui yauh chyun ngóh</b>	My daughter is giving me an attitude again

Like other verbs and adjectives, they can take aspect markers such as **jó** to indicate a change in the situation described:

<b>Ngóhdeih maahn-máan suhk-jó</b>	
We gradually got to know each other ( <i>lit.</i> became familiar)	

<b>Nǐ go yuht mōhng-jó di</b>	
This month has got busier	

Similarly, stative verbs combine with particles such as **saai** 'all' and **màaih** (see Unit 15):

**Kéuih suhk saai di baatgwa sāmán**  
She's familiar with all the gossip

**Ngóh mòhug màaih uī go yuht jauh msái jounh**  
I'll be busy for this (one more) month then I won't have to work

## Easy and difficult

The words **yùhngyih** 'easy' and **làahn** 'difficult' pose some difficulty. When followed by a verb the meaning is literally 'easy to ...' but actually means that something happens easily.

**Ngóh hóu yùhngyih wáu dóu jinggeui** It's easy for me to find evidence  
(lit. I'm very easy to find evidence)

**Nī dī yéh hóu yùhngyih cho** It's easy to get these things  
(lit. these things are easy to be wrong) wrong

**Léih hóu làahn gáaisik dím gáai** It's hard for you to explain why  
(lit. you're very difficult to explain why)

**Ngóh hóu làahn séungjeuhng** I have difficulty imagining it  
(lit. I'm very difficult to imagine)

The literal translations are often reflected in Chinese learners' English (as in 'I'm easy to make mistakes'). Colloquially, **yùhngyih** is often shortened to **yih**, as in:

**Hóu yih wán ge jē**  
It's easy to find it

Idiomatically, **mát** 'what' is inserted to give **yùhng-mát-yih**: a form of rhetorical question (see Unit 17):

**Yùhng-mát-yih gūng dóu móuh màaih ga!**  
(One) could easily lose one's job as well!

A few other adjectives work the same way as 'easy' and 'difficult', notably **fōughihu** 'convenient' and **hólàahng** 'possible':

**Léih fōng-nah-fōughihu sūngkèih-yuht làih a?**  
Is it convenient for you to come on Sunday?

**Kéuihdeih m̄h hóilàhng gou léih ge**  
There's no way they can sue you

### Exercise 7.1

Add a suitable object to the stative verb.

Example: **Ngóh gin dóu dī hàaih ngāam saai léih**  
I saw some shoes that were just right (for you)

- 1 **Ngóh hóu dāamsām \_\_\_\_\_** I'm worried (about ...)
- 2 **Kéuih hóu sibmouh \_\_\_\_\_** He's envious of ...
- 3 **Ngóh m̄h gēng \_\_\_\_\_ ga** I'm not scared
- 4 **Kéuih làahnpàhngyáuh dahkbiht gánjēung** Her boyfriend is particularly anxious (about ...)
- 5 **Kéuih séung chynn \_\_\_\_\_** (street language) He wants to show an attitude (to ...)
- 6 **Léih suhk \_\_\_\_\_ a?** Which ... are you familiar with?
- 7 **Ngóh m̄h jī kéuih mōhng \_\_\_\_\_ wo** I don't know what he's busy with
- 8 **Hóu dū yàhn douhgeih \_\_\_\_\_** A lot of people are jealous (of ...)

### Exercise 7.2

Add an aspect marker or verbal particle such as **jó, gwo, saai, m̄aih, fān** to the adjective or stative verb to give the meaning specified.

Example: **Léih fēih-jó wo!** You've put on weight

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1 <b>Kéuih joah yùhn sáuseuht yìhgā leng _____</b>         | After the operation, she's got her beauty back |
| 2 <b>Kéuih yìhchihn chàhnggēng leng _____</b>              | She was beautiful once                         |
| 3 <b>Léih hóuchih leng _____ bo</b>                        | You seem to have become more beautiful         |
| 4 <b>Jeuk-jiyuh gihn sán sām, léih sèhng go leng _____</b> | You're looking completely beautiful            |
| 5 <b>Ngóh mōhng _____ gām chí jē</b>                       | I'll just be busy one more time                |
| 6 <b>Ngóh jeugahn mōhng _____</b>                          | I've got busy lately                           |
| 7 <b>Ngóh gām lín meih mōhng _____</b>                     | I haven't been busy this year                  |
| 8 <b>Ngóh hóichí mōhng _____ dī</b>                        | I'm starting to be busy again                  |

- 9 **Lǐ pàaih tūnhei lyúhn** \_\_\_\_\_ The weather has become warmer lately
- 10 **Yihgá lyúhn** \_\_\_\_\_ It's all warm again now

### Exercise 7.3

Insert **hón yùhngyih/hóu làahn** 'easy/difficult' in the following sentences.

- Ngóh tūhng kéuih hahpjok**  
It's difficult for me to collaborate with him
- Kéuih lám dóu daapngon**  
It's easy for her to think of the answer
- Kéuihdeih yèhng-jó nǐ chéuhng béichoi**  
It's easy for them to win this competition
- Nǐ go yáhn-gín sailonhjái yuhng dóu**  
It's difficult for children to use this software
- Kéuihdeih béi yáhn ngāak**  
It's easy for them to be cheated
- Chín múhājūk yāt go yáhn jǎnjǐng ge sēuiyi**  
It's hard for money to satisfy a person's real need
- Yīgā ge tīnhei, go go dōu sēungfúng**  
In the current weather, it's easy for everyone to catch a cold
- Dī yāmgohk līhng ngóh lám fān yīhchīhn ge sīh**  
It's easy for the music to make me think of past events
- Léih yīhwàih ngóh yīngsīhng yáhn jōuh-yéh àh?**  
You thought it's easy for me to promise people to do things?
- Lǐ jáng yáhn hái nīdōuh sāngcheyáhn**  
It's difficult for this kind of people to survive here

# UNIT EIGHT

## Classifiers revisited

### Classifiers as articles

Classifiers play several important roles in Cantonese grammar (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 8). One of the distinctive grammatical features of Cantonese is the way in which the classifier acts like a definite article, as in **ga chē** 'the car' referring to a particular car known to the speaker. This is especially so when the classifier goes with the subject or topic of the sentence:

<b>Gāau ūk héi hóu la</b>	The house is finished
<b>Fahn boujít tái yùhn la</b>	I've finished reading the newspaper

Compare a 'bare' noun used without a classifier, which refers to things belonging to a certain category in general:

<b>Páau-chē gwai dī</b>	Sports cars are more expensive
<b>Hùhng-jáu hóu yáuh-yik</b>	Red wine is good for you

Some minimal pairs bring out the difference between the 'generic' meaning of a noun used alone and the 'specific' meaning of the same noun with a classifier:

<b>Gauh ūk pèhug hóu dō</b>	Old houses are much cheaper
<b>Gāau gauh ūk pèhng hóu dō</b>	The old house is much cheaper
<b>Faatgwok-yáuh hóu sīk héungsaah</b>	French people know how to enjoy life
<b>Go Faatgwok-yáuh hóu sīk héungsaah</b>	The Frenchman knows how to enjoy life

When the classifier goes with an object coming after the verb, the noun phrase may be indefinite indicating something which is not already known to the hearer but usually still refers to a specific entity:

<b>Kéuihdeih máaih-jó ga sán chē</b>	They've bought a new car
<b>Kéuih sīk-jó go léuih-yisāng</b>	He's got to know a female doctor

That is, classifiers help to pick out a particular item or individual. In this respect they serve like articles in English and other European languages.

## Possessive classifiers

Classifiers are often used to indicate possession in preference to the particle *ge* (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 5), especially when referring to a particular possessed item:

<b>Léih tuih fu tsai dyún; nh ngāam jeuk</b>
Your trousers are too short for you; they don't fit

<b>Kéuihdeih gāan ūk hóiyih mohng dóu Ching Mái Daaih Kieh</b>
(From) their house one can see the Tsing Ma Suspension Bridge

This may be seen as a natural extension of the use of classifier + noun to refer to specific things as described above. These usages are characteristic of Cantonese as opposed to Mandarin and most other Chinese languages. Another extension is to add a demonstrative, *nī/lī* 'this' or *gó* 'that' before the classifier:

<b>Léih nī gihn sām</b>	This shirt of yours
<b>Kéuih gó júng singgaak</b>	That personality of his
<b>Ngóhdeih gó chàhng láu</b>	That flat of ours

## dī as plural classifier

*dī* works like a rather special classifier. It serves not only to indicate plurality but also, with mass nouns, a certain quantity:

i With countable nouns:

<b>Dí hohksāang gāmyaht nh bāih</b>	The students are not coming today
<b>Dí wá hái bīndouh máaih ga?</b>	Where did you buy the pictures?
<b>Ngóhdeih gin dóu dī doihsyú</b>	We saw some kangaroos

ii With mass nouns:

<b>Dí tòng hōu lūng-jó</b>	The soup has burnt (as a result of overcooking)
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<b>Dī yāmgohk taaì chòuh</b>	The music is too noisy
<b>Ngóh séung máaih dī sāang-gwó</b>	I want to buy some fruit

It is also used generically:

<b>Dī làuhga hóhchih sīng fāan</b>	House prices seem to be going up again
<b>Jeuigahn dī choh hóu gwai</b>	Vegetables have been expensive recently

A peculiar use of **dī** is in questions with **mātyéh**:

<b>Yáuh dī mātyéh yàhn háidoh a?</b>	What people are there?
<b>Síh dī mātyéh hóu a?</b>	What (things) shall we eat?

The use of **dī** here indicates that the answer to the question is expected to be in the plural.

## Classifiers as quantifiers

Another feature of Cantonese classifiers is reduplication used to give the meanings 'all' or 'every':

<b>Go-go léuhjái dōu jūngyi kéuh</b>	All the girls like him
<b>Léih tuih-tuih fu dōu haih hák-sík</b>	All your trousers are black

Here two rules apply, as with other quantifiers meaning 'all' and 'every' (see Unit 15):

a **dōu** is used before the verb;

b The object with reduplicated classifier comes before the verb:

<b>Kéuh bún-bún syū dōu tái-gwo</b>	He's read every book
<b>Ngóhdeih gāan-gāan poutáu dōu heui-gwo</b>	We've been to every shop

When there is an auxiliary or other combination of verbs, the reduplicated classifier phrase comes before both:

<b>Ngóh sīnsāng tou-tou sāam dōu yihm gwai</b>
My husband thinks every suit is expensive

**Kéuih jek-jek pàaihjī dōu wah nh jūngyi**  
He says he dislikes every brand

Once the classifier is reduplicated, the noun itself can readily be omitted when the meaning is clear from the context:

**Kéuih yeuhng-yeuhng (sūng) dōu jūngyi sīhk**  
He likes everything (every dish)

**Ngóhdeih gāu-gāu (poutáu) dōu heui-gwo**  
We've been to them all (every shop)

## Nouns as collective classifiers

Collective classifiers are those such as **bān** 'group', 'class' which refer to a grouping (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 8). Many nouns can be pressed into service as classifiers with a collective sense. The word **ūk** 'house', for example, is normally a noun, but can serve as a classifier meaning 'house full':

<b>yāt ūk ngahm dāng</b>	a house full of dim lights ( <i>lit.</i> one house dim light)
(from a song sung by Faye Wong)	
<b>yāt tóuh hei</b>	a belly full of air ( <i>lit.</i> one stomach air)
<b>Tin-lohk wán dou sèhng mihu sá</b>	Tin-lok played till his whole face was covered in sand

## Generic classifiers

Words for 'kinds' also behave as classifiers:

<b>gó jūng taaidouh</b>	that kind of attitude
<b>lí leuih yàuh</b>	this kind of person

They may also be treated as nouns, hence one can also add the possessive **ge**, especially in more formal contexts such as broadcasting:

<b>gó jūng ge gámgek</b>	that kind of feeling
<b>lí leuih ge jítmuhk</b>	this kind of programme

The classifier **jek**, in addition to classifying animals, serves as a generic classifier:

Gó jek pàaihí hóu làuhhàhng  
 Lì jek jáu gwai-mh-gwai a?  
 Kéuih síh bìn jek láaih-fán a?

That brand is very popular  
 Is this (brand of) wine expensive?  
 What (brand of) milk powder did  
 he take?

Ngóh jūngyi wān-wān-yàuh-yàuh  
 tēng-tēng-wah-wah gó jek

I like the tender, compliant kind  
 (of man/woman)

## Alternative classifiers

As the more thorough dictionaries will show, a given noun may take more than one classifier, often with a subtle difference in meaning.

Kéuih go háu gam daaih  
 Kéuih bá háu hóu sūileih

Her mouth is so big (physically)  
 She has a formidable mouth (in  
 terms of speaking)

Léih séung tái hīn touh (hei) a?

Which film do you want to see?

Léih séung tái hīn chéuhng (hei) a?

Which screening (of the film) do  
 you want to see?

The classifier *chéuhng* treats the noun as an event taking place in time:

### Entity

yāt go behng a disease

kéuih go híuyín her performance

yāt go ngh-wuih a misunder-  
 standing

### Event

yāt chéuhng daaih an illness  
 behng

kéuih ní chéuhng this performance  
 híuyín of hers

yāt chéuhng a case of misunder-  
 ngh-wuih standing

For example:

Kéuih gīnglihk-gwo yāt chéuhng daaih behng jūngyū gaai-jó yīn  
 After experiencing a (period of) serious illness he finally gave up  
 smoking

The classifier *chéuhng* is used here because the verb *gīnglihk* 'experience' indicates an event. Similarly:

Wòhng Fēi hōi-jó sāamsahp chéuhng yín-cheung-wúi  
 Wong Fei gave thirty concerts

Other alternative classifiers appear in slang expressions (Unit 24)

## Adjective + classifier compounds

The adjectives **daaih** and **sai** combine with classifiers to form compounds which work like predicative adjectives:

Measures:

<b>hóu daaih-dēui</b>	a big pile (of papers, etc.)
<b>hóu sai-wún</b>	a small bowl (of rice, etc.)

Sortal classifiers:

<b>hóu daaih-gān (gūngsī)</b>	very big (company)
<b>hóu sai-jek (māau)</b>	very small (cat)

Several expressions of this form have idiomatic meanings:

<b>hóu daaih-jek</b>	well-built
<b>hóu sai-lāp</b>	small (in physique)
<b>hóu daaih-dáam</b>	brave
<b>hóu sai-dáam</b>	cowardly
<b>hóu daaih-wohk</b>	big trouble ( <i>lit.</i> big wok)
<b>hóu daaih-jāi</b>	big trouble ( <i>lit.</i> big dose)
<b>hóu daaih-beih</b>	snobbish ( <i>lit.</i> big-nose)
<b>hóu daaih-pái</b>	putting on airs ( <i>lit.</i> big label)

## Classifiers after the noun

While the classifier phrase normally comes before the noun, there are some specialized contexts in which it may follow:

i Enumerating, as in a shopping list:

**máih sām bāau, sih-yàuh yāt jēun, tóng léuhng hahp**  
three bags of rice, a bottle of soy sauce and two boxes of sweets

ii Advertising:

**tàuh jéung sung gēipiu léuhng jéung**  
(*lit.* head prize give air tickets two sheet)  
The first prize is two free air tickets

## Verbal classifier phrases

A classifier phrase (consisting of numeral + classifier) can come after a verb to specify some aspect of the action described, much as a noun classifier specifies the noun. These phrases may thus be termed verbal classifier phrases. There are two main types:

a Indicating the frequency or duration of the action:

<b>dá sǎam háh</b>	knock three times
<b>dǎng yāt jahn</b>	wait a moment

b The part of the body or instrument used:

<b>tái yāt ngáahn</b>	take a look ( <i>lit.</i> look one eye)
<b>síhk yāt daahm</b>	take a bite ( <i>lit.</i> eat one mouthful)

A point to note here is that the object comes between the verb and the classifier phrase:

<b>tek kéuih yāt geuk</b>	give him a kick
<b>sek ngóh yāt daahm</b>	give me a kiss
<b>laauh kéuih jāt chāan</b>	give him a scolding ( <i>lit.</i> scold him a mealful)

Such phrases are useful for quantifying actions. While **yāt** is used for single actions, the quantity can be varied, for example with **dō** 'more' to mean 'another':

<b>tái dō yāt ugáahu</b>	take another look
<b>láam màaih yāt gaah</b>	hug together closely
<b>ugáauh kéuih géi daahm</b>	bite him a few times
<b>yám dō léuhng daahm</b>	drink a couple more mouthfuls
<b>go dihnwá héung-jó géi chí</b>	the phone rang a few times

The verbal classifier phrase can also come at the beginning of the clause like a topic:

**Yāt háh jauh dá séi jek mán**  
One swipec and the mosquito was dead

**Yāt daahm jauh síhk saai**  
One mouthful and it's all gone

**Ngóh yáht ngáahú tái dóu saai yahpbiu yáuh géi dô yàhn**  
 In one look I saw how many people were inside

### Exercise 8.1

Add a classifier to give the meaning indicated.

Example: **Chyùhfóng hóu gányiu**

The kitchen is important:

**Go chyùhfóng hóu gányiu**

- |                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| 1 Séihlauh hóu dung          | The office is cold                         |
| 2 Baahk-jáu hóu tái-máaih    | (The bottle of) white wine is good value   |
| 3 Sái-jóng taai gwai         | The suit is too expensive                  |
| 4 Sān syū maaih saai la      | The (pile of) new books have all sold      |
| 5 Sósìh mgin-jó              | The keys are lost                          |
| 6 Sānfánjing wán fāan la     | The ID card has been found                 |
| 7 Gaaisiuh seun hóu làahn sé | The recommendation letter is hard to write |
| 8 Hohksāang háidouh sihwāi   | The (class) of students are demonstrating  |
| 9 Páau-chē gwai dĩ           | The sports car is more expensive           |
| 10 Lùnhghā hóu sāsū          | The lobster is nice and fresh              |

### Exercise 8.2

Reduplicate the classifier to give the meaning 'all'/'every', including the adverb **dōu** before the verb (see also Unit 15).

Example: **Gāan ūk hóu leng**

The house is lovely

→ **Gāan-gāan ūk dōu hóu leng**

All the houses are lovely

- |                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| 1 Go hohksāang jáu-jó            | The student has left                      |
| 2 Tou hei hóu muh                | The film was boring                       |
| 3 Tiuh táihmuhk inh làahn        | The question was not hard                 |
| 4 Jēung tái bái yàhn dehug-jó    | The table has been reserved               |
| 5 Ga gēi bāu saai                | The plane was full                        |
| 6 Kéuih búu syū hóu hóu-maaih    | His book sells well                       |
| 7 Kéuih gihn sām hóu gwai        | Her dress is expensive                    |
| 8 Hahp tóng bāu dāk hóu leng     | The box of sweets was beautifully wrapped |
| 9 Ngóhdeih yiu tái bún syū       | We have to read the book                  |
| 10 Ngóhdeih gin-jó yehug dim sām | We ordered a kind of dim sum              |

**Exercise 8.3**

Match the verbal classifier phrase with the verb or verb phrase provided

- |                                |                                 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 <b>yám</b> drink             | a <b>yāt chāan</b> one mealful  |
| 2 <b>mohng</b> watch           | b <b>gái geuk</b> a few feet    |
| 3 <b>tek</b> kick              | c <b>yāt háh</b> one time       |
| 4 <b>mīt léih</b> pinch you    | d <b>yāt daahm</b> one mouthful |
| 5 <b>laauh kéuih</b> scold him | e <b>yāt pōu</b> one game       |
| 6 <b>dóu</b> gamble            | f <b>yāt ngáahn</b> one eye     |

# UNIT NINE

## Topic and focus

Making something the topic of the sentence by putting it at the beginning of a sentence is known as topicalization (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 22). In particular, this is used for:

i Making the object of the verb the topic of the sentence:

**Ní go yuht ge yàhn-góng kénih yíhng sái saai**  
(lit. this month's salary he already spend all)  
He's already spent all of this month's salary

**Yíngwok hóu dô yàhn séung heui** (from a film about 1997)  
(lit. England many people want to go)  
A lot of people want to go to England

**Léihyàuh jí yáuh yáht go** (TV advertisement)  
(lit. reason only have one)  
There's only one reason

In each case one could leave the object after the verb as usual, for example:

**Hóu dô yàhn séung heui Yíngwok**  
A lot of people want to go to England

**Jí yáuh yáht go léihyàuh**  
There's only one reason

In many cases the 'topicalized' versions are preferred for stylistic and other reasons: the advertisement, for example, puts the emphasis on 'one' (relative clauses are another case in point: see Unit 18).

ii Setting a topic about which a statement is made:



**Tái yīsāng léih nh hóyih tō ge**  
 (lit. see doctor you cannot drag)  
 You can't put off seeing the doctor

**Gúdn yāmgohk ngóh béigam jāngyi gougàlm duhkjauh**  
 (lit. classical music I rather like piano solo)  
 As far as classical music is concerned I prefer solo piano

An alternative way to make an element the topic is to place it between the subject and the verb:

**Kéuih Dākman góng dāk hóu hóu**  
 (lit. she German speaks manner very good)  
 She speaks German very well

**Léih Jūnggwok lihksi sūk dāk dō gwo ngóh**  
 (lit. you Chinese history know manner more than me)  
 You know more about Chinese history than I do

**Kéuih síu-tàih-kàhm láai dāk géi hóu**  
 (lit. he violin plays manner quite good)  
 He plays the violin quite well

### Focusing with lhn 'even'

While topicalization makes an element the 'topic' which the sentence is about, focusing involves putting an element 'in focus' as something to be emphasized. Using **lhn** 'even', the pattern is: **lhn** (focus) **dōu** (verb):

**Lhn kéuih tsaitái dōu nh jīdou** Even his wife didn't know  
**Lhn ngóh go léui dōu bōng ngóh sáu** Even my daughter is helping me

Note two essential features of this construction (which generally go together – see Unit 15):

- a **dōu** is inserted before the verb;
- b the object of a verb, when so focused, comes in front of the verb:

**Léih lhn nāi yéh dōu yiu**  
 (lit. you even these things still want)  
 You even want these things!

The same pattern also occurs without **lhn**, especially in the negative

**Ngóh yāt geui dōu móuh góng-gwo**  
 (lit. I one phrase still didn't say)  
 I didn't say a word

**Kéuih gam leung ge gāsi dōu mih yiu**  
 (lit. she such nice furniture still not want)  
 She doesn't even want such nice furniture

**ihh** goes naturally together with the particle **màaih** (see Unit 15), one meaning of which is 'including ...':

**Kéuih lihu pèih dōu sihk màaih** He even eats the skin  
**Lihu fahn gūng dōu móuh màaih** (He) even lost his job

### sīn, jauh and focus

The particles **sīn** 'only' and **jauh** 'then' are also used to express focus:

**Léih sīn haih jyūn-gā** You're the expert (not me)  
**Tiungyaht siu haih ngóh sāaugyaht** My birthday is tomorrow (not today)  
**Ni go jauh haih ngóh séung wán** This is the one I wanted to find  
**gó go**

The two particles **sīn** and **jauh** contrast in a systematic way:

i In the domain of time:

**Kéuih bun yé sah-p-yih dím sīn fāau ūkkéi**  
 He doesn't return home until 12 midnight

**Kéuih bun yé sah-p-yih dím jauh fāau ūkkéi**  
 He returns home as early as 12 midnight

Here **sīn** implies that the returning is later than expected while **jauh** implies the opposite, namely, earlier than expected.

ii In the domain of quantity:

**Ngóh dī pàhngyáuh yám sāam jēun jám sīn gam hàuh**  
 (lit. my friends drink three bottles of wine then enough throat)  
 My friends don't get enough until they have drunk three bottles of wine  
 (more than expected)



- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 6 Ngóh m̄h dākhaahn tái gāmyaht<br>ge sāmáu | I'm too busy to read today's news            |
| 7 Ngóhdeih sīk sūn-sūn Yahtmán              | We know a little Japanese                    |
| 8 Kéuih hohk-jó sām līh<br>gongkām          | She's taken piano lessons for three<br>years |
| 9 Kéuih m̄h wúih jōuh gam làahn<br>ge yéh   | He won't do such difficult things            |
| 10 Léih yīnggōi dō dĩ jōuh<br>wahnduhng     | You should do more exercise                  |

## Exercise 9.2

Use *līh* ... *dōu* and/or *màaih* to put the italicized element in focus,

e.g. Kéuih m̄h sīhk máahn-faahn  
He doesn't eat *dinner*

→ Kéuih līh máahn-faahn dōu m̄h sīhk  
He doesn't even eat dinner

Go bīhbi haam dōu gīh sām sǎp-jó  
The baby cried such that *the clothes* got wet

→ Go bīhbi haam dōu līh gīh sām dōu sǎp màaih  
The baby cried such that even the clothes got wet as well

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 Ngóh daai jīpiu-bóu làih                  | I bring (along) <i>the cheque book</i><br>(as well)                    |
| 2 Kéuih m̄h sīk jīng yú                     | He doesn't (even) know how to<br>steam <i>fish</i>                     |
| 3 Kéuihdeih meih heui-gwo Chín<br>Séui Wáan | They haven't (even) been to<br><i>Repulse Bay</i>                      |
| 4 Gíngchaat m̄h seun go yīsāng              | The police don't trust (even) <i>the</i><br><i>doctor</i>              |
| 5 Kéuih je ga chē béi ngóh                  | He (even) loans me <i>his car</i>                                      |
| 6 Ngóh gēng dōu būn láahngghohn             | I'm so scared that I (even) came<br>out in <i>a cold sweat</i>         |
| 7 Kéuih yiu maaih go gúdíng fājēnn          | He (even) has to sell <i>the antique</i><br><i>vase</i> (as well)      |
| 8 Ngóh lóuhgung bohk Chínghjān-wá           | My husband (even) studies <i>Chiu</i><br><i>Chow</i> (as well)         |
| 9 Kéuih ngoh dou sīhk gaakyeh<br>sung       | She's so hungry that she ate<br>(even) <i>the left-overs</i> (as well) |



# UNIT TEN

## Using **jēung**

**jēung** is one of the 'empty' functional words (**hēui-chih** in Cantonese) whose role is an essentially grammatical one. Its function is to take a direct object and place it before the verb:

verb-object → **jēung** – object-verb

This resembles a serial verb construction (Unit 11) except that **jēung** is not used by itself as a verb.

### **jēung** vs. **ba**

For learners with some knowledge of Mandarin, **jēung** is the nearest counterpart to **ba** and is broadly similar in function, though the use of **jēung** is more restricted: in many cases where **ba** might be used **jēung** would not. For example:

#### *Mandarin*

**Ba shū fang zài nàbian** Put the book there

**Ba deng guān diào** Turn off the light

**Ba wǒ de shū na zhè** Hold my books

#### *Cantonese*

**Jēung bōn syū fong**  
**hái góudoh**

but not **\*Jēung dāng sik-jó**

but not **\*Jēung ngóh dī syū**  
**līng-jyuh**

**jēung** retains a sense of displacement, and in colloquial usage at least, is most typically used when the object of the sentence is literally moved from one place to another:

**Ngóhdeih jēung dī gauh gāsi bīm ján**

We're moving the old furniture away

**Kénih jēng dī laahn sām dām-jó**  
She threw the torn clothes away

**Kénih jēng fūk wá gwa hái chēnhg donh**  
She hung the picture on the wall

One advantage of using the construction in such cases is that the vacant position after the verb can then be used for another element of the sentence, such as a prepositional phrase indicating where the object is moved to:

<b>Jēng jing-gei ló chēut làih</b>	Bring the evidence out
<b>Jēng dī syā bān fān làih</b>	Move the books back

It is possible to say:

<b>Bái go fā-jēun hái chēutbihn</b>	Put the vase outside
<b>Gwa dī sām hái tīntói donh</b>	Hang up the clothes on the roof

Nevertheless the version with **jēung** is preferred:

<b>Jēng go fā-jēun bái hái chēntbihn</b>	Put the vase outside
<b>Jēng dī sām gwa hái tīntói donh</b>	Hang the clothes up on the roof

Similarly, with duration and frequency phrases following the verb it is convenient to use **jēng** and put the object before the verb:

**Sinsāng jēng pīn mán gōi-jó sām chí**  
The teacher has reviewed the composition three times

**Ngóh jēng go beihmaht sām-màaih hái sām yahpbihn sah p līh**  
I've been hiding the secret in my heart for ten years

## jēung in High Cantonese

Apart from the sense of literal displacement, more abstract uses are possible. For example, **jēung** can be used in cases of transfer of ownership or possession:

**Ngóh jēung nī gīhn sīh gāu bái léih**  
I turn this matter over to you

**Ngóhdeih jēung bāt wàihcháan fān sām fahn**  
We divide the legacy into three parts

**Faai dī jēung go mihuggwai sáubín bái fāu yàhndeh**  
Return the expensive watch quickly (to the owner)

Still more abstract senses of transfer include the following:

**Kéuih jēung gá ge doug haih jān ge**  
He treats what is false as if it were true

**Dínggái léih jēung pàhngyáuh doug jowh dīhkyàh gá?**  
Why do you treat friends as foes?

**Léih yiu jēung yihchihh ge sih mōhng-gei saai (kéuih)**  
You need to forget about things that happened before

Such extended uses of **jēung** are a feature of High Cantonese, perhaps under the influence of Mandarin and written Chinese where **ba** would be used in such cases. They can be heard in public announcements, for example:

**Chéng jēung yámleuhng sáu-sai**  
Please turn your volume down

**Chéng jēung gwaijubug mahtháu kwàihdāaih hái sánbín**  
Please carry your valuable belongings with you

Similarly, transitive verbs with the suffix **-fa**, a High Cantonese feature, are often used together with **jēung**:

**Jingfá dásyun jēung Hēunggóng sou-máh-fa**  
The government is planning to digitalize Hong Kong

**Léihdeih nh yinggoi jēung mahntàih fūkjaahp-fa**  
You should not complicate the problems

### **jēung . . . kéuih and Imperatives**

A rather idiomatic combination uses the pronoun **kéuih** to represent the object already mentioned as the object of **jēung**:

**Ngóh jēung dī yin-wō dahn-jó kéuih** I've stewed the birds' nests  
(for soup)

Note the regular use of the aspect marker **-jó** in this combination, which is used especially in imperative sentences:



- Léih jēung dī wūjōu sāam sái-jó kéuih lā** Clean the dirty clothes  
**Léih jēung dī yin-wōsihk-jó kéuih lā** (Why don't you) eat up the bird's nest soup!

In contrast to those discussed above, this is quite a colloquial usage (compare other colloquial uses of **kéuih** in Unit 24).

## Exercise 10.1

Form sentences with **jēung** as alternatives to those given.

Example: **Ngóh sailóu bái fān dī chin ngóh**  
 My brother is giving me the money back  
 → **Ngóh sailóu jēung dī chin bái fān ngóh**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1 <b>Ngóh gāau gūngfó bái sīnsāang</b>               | I hand in the homework to the teacher        |
| 2 <b>Kéuih wuhn-jó go mahtmah</b>                    | She has cancelled the code                   |
| 3 <b>Ngóh chéuisin-jó go wuhháu</b>                  | I've cancelled the account                   |
| 4 <b>Ngóh séung gwa héi fuk wá</b>                   | I want to hang up the picture                |
| 5 <b>Tin-waih góí-jó go yahrtkèih</b>                | Tin-wai has changed the date                 |
| 6 <b>Kéuih jūngyū jáp hóu gāan fóng</b>              | He has finally tidied up the room            |
| 7 <b>Ngóh yiu ló fān dī syū heui hohkhaauh</b>       | I have to take the books back to school      |
| 8 <b>Mùihmái chaap dī fā hái fájēun douh</b>         | Little sister put the flowers in the vase    |
| 9 <b>Kéuih sūn-màaih saai dī seun</b>                | She hid away all the letters                 |
| 10 <b>Lóuhbān chyùhn-jó dī chin yahp ngàhn hòhng</b> | The boss has deposited the money in the bank |

## Exercise 10.2

Add a resultative, duration or frequency complement in the following **jēung** constructions.

Example: **Kéuih jēung dī seun sau màaih \_\_\_\_\_**  
 She hid the letters away for ten years  
 → **Kéuih jēung dī seun sūn màaih sahþ līhn**

- 1 **Kéuih jēung gāan fóng maat dāk \_\_\_\_\_**  
 He wiped the room clean

- 2 Gūngsī jēung go gachūh góí-jó \_\_\_\_\_  
The company has changed the price many times
- 3 Ngóh jēung bún syū yàuh tàuh dou méih tái-jó \_\_\_\_\_  
I read the book twice from beginning to end
- 4 Kéuih jēung dĩ tàuhfaat jím dāk \_\_\_\_\_  
He cut the hair very short
- 5 Kéuih jēung fahn láihmaht sūn-màaih-jó \_\_\_\_\_  
She hid the gift away for two days
- 6 Kéuih jēung tsih yú jing-jó \_\_\_\_\_  
She steamed the fish for ten minutes
- 7 Dī gūngyàh jēung chyàh uk yàuh-jó \_\_\_\_\_  
The workers painted the whole house once
- 8 Ngóh jēung sūn gō fāanyihk-jó \_\_\_\_\_  
I translated the song a few times
- 9 Lóuhbáan jēung go gwónggou dāng-jó \_\_\_\_\_  
The boss has put up the advertisement for three days
- 10 Kéuih jēung go léui baah dou \_\_\_\_\_  
She adorned her daughter beautifully

### Exercise 10.3

Form imperative sentences with **jēung** as alternatives to those given, paying attention the use of the pronoun **kéuih**.

Example: Léih maaih saai dĩ gúpiu kéuih lâ Sell all the shares  
→ (Léih) jēung dĩ gúpiu maaih saai kéuih lâ

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 Léih ló gihu sām lohk làih ā               | Bring the dress down                      |
| 2 Ngóhdeih dām-jó dĩ laahpsaap kéuih lâ      | Let's throw away the rubbish              |
| 3 Léih faai dĩ góí saai dĩ gyúu kéuih        | Hurry up and finish marking the scripts   |
| 4 Jikhāk wuh-jó go dihnchih kéuih            | Change the battery immediately            |
| 5 Faai-faai-chui-chui jāp hóu gān fóng kéuih | Tidy up the room quickly                  |
| 6 Chan yiht yám-jó dĩ Jāng yeuhk kéuih       | Drink the Chinese medicine while it's hot |
| 7 Fong dai go syūhān hái deihhá              | Put the school bag down on the floor      |
| 8 Jeui hóu dihn-jó dĩ tàuhfaat kéuih         | It's best to perm your hair               |
| 9 Sái saai dĩ wūjōu sām kéuih                | Wash all the dirty clothes                |
| 10 Jōngsāu hóu gān uk kéuih                  | Decorate the house well                   |

# UNIT ELEVEN

## Serial verbs

A class of words in Chinese are known as 'coverbs' because of the way they co-occur with another verb.

<b>Kéuih gān ngóh hohk jyú-sung</b>	He's learning to cook from
(COVERB) (VERB)	me
<b>Kéuih waihjó ngóh héi lónhbbán laauh</b>	He was told off by the boss
(COVERB) (VERB)	for my sake

In Cantonese these include a number of words which serve both as independent verbs and as coverbs:

	<i>As verb</i>	<i>As coverb</i>
<b>hái</b>	be at	at
<b>tùhng</b>	accompany	with
<b>gān</b>	follow	with
<b>don</b>	reach	until
<b>deui</b>	face	towards
<b>heung</b>	face	towards (direction)
<b>waih (jó)</b>		for (the sake of)

Given that their meanings have to do with spatial relationships, it is tempting to equate the coverbs with prepositions, as the English translations suggest. However, the coverbs behave like verbs in taking aspect markers such as **jó**, **gwo**, **gán**, **jyñh**, etc. and verbal particles such as **saai** and **fāan**:

**Ga chē henng-jó gó bihn hàahng**  
The car went off in that direction

**Go BBC geijé tùhng-gwo kéuih jonh fóngmahn**  
The BBC reporter has done an interview with her

**Ngóh lóuhgūng tūhng-gán go jái wáau Daaihfuýng**

My husband is playing Monopoly with my son

**Go go gúđūng hái saai douh hōiwúi**

All the shareholders are here having a meeting

**Kéuihdeih jūngyū hái fāan màaih yārchàih jouh-yéh**

They're finally back working together again

In this respect coverbs behave like serial verbs, a series of verbs in the same clause without a conjunction linking them. This is a characteristic feature of Cantonese, together with many languages of southeast Asia, but not generally found in European languages – the closest counterpart being the American English 'Let's go eat'. A typical example is the following:

**Ngóh sīnsāang wúih bōng ngóh wán chē-sih**

(lit. my husband will help me find car keys)

My husband will look for the car keys for me

Notice how the additional verb typically takes the place of a preposition. The meaning which results often seems to be that of a preposition rather than a verb, e.g. **bōng** literally means 'help' but in a serial verb construction it means to do something for another's benefit, not to help the person to accomplish something:

**Léih bōng ngóh dá go dihnwá ǎ**

(lit. you help me dial a telephone)

Make a call for me

**Faai dĩ bōng go bìhbì wuhn liuhpín lā**

(lit. quickly help the baby change nappy)

Change the nappy for the baby quickly

Clearly one cannot 'help' a baby to change a nappy and the intended meaning is to change it for him or her. Similarly, the verb **wán** by itself means 'look for' but in the serial verb construction this meaning is attenuated to the point where it means 'with' or 'use':

**Léih wán faai bouh maaht háh kéuih lā**

(lit. you look for sheet cloth wipe a little it)

Give it a wipe with a cloth

**Léih wán go gòi kám-jyuh go wohk ā**  
(lit. you look for the lid cover the wok)  
Use the lid to cover the wok

Since chances are that the cover of the wok is lying within reach of the cook, this need not entail any actual searching. Similarly, it is hardly necessary to look for one's own hands:

**Wán jek sáu jē-jyuh deni ngáahn**  
Cover one's eyes with one hand

Common meanings expressed by serial verbs include:

- With – instrument

**Léih m̄h hóyih sèhgyaht yuhng chin gáaikyut mahntàih**  
You can't always solve problems with money

**Hóu faai hóyih yuhng sáutàih dihnwá séuhngmóhng**  
Very soon one will be able to get on the Internet via mobile phones

- Together with – accompanying

**Ngóh pàih léih sīh-kaahn lā**  
(lit. I accompany you eat rice)  
I'll have lunch with you

- For, on one's behalf

**Léih doih ngóh gūnghéi Rowena ā**  
(lit. you replace me congratulate Rowena)  
Send my congratulations to Rowena

**Ngóh dahng kēmihdeih gōuhing**  
(lit. I for them happy)  
I feel happy for them

**Ngóh jānhaih dahng léihdeih m̄h dái**  
(lit. I really for you not deserving)  
I feel really sorry for you

**Mgōi léih waih-háh yàhndeih jehhkséung**  
Please try to show consideration for others

**Lī go haih waih léih dohk sūn dehug jouh ge**  
This is tailor made for you

## Simultaneous actions

A series of verbs can express simultaneous actions, especially with the continuous aspect marker **jyuh** attached to the first verb (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 19):

**Jā-jyuh fahn boujī dāug yàhn**  
Wait for someone (while) carrying a newspaper

**Go léui láam-jyuh go gūngjái fan-gaau**  
The daughter sleeps hugging a soft toy

**Yán-jyuh ngáahnleuih góng joi gin**  
Say goodbye (while) holding back one's tears

## Sequence of actions

A sequence of verbs can express a sequence of actions:

**Gei-jyuh chènuih hàaih yahp fóng**  
Remember to take off one's shoes before going into the room

**Báau tóuh síhk yenhk**  
(lit. fill stomach eat medicine)  
Eat before taking the medicine; take the medicine on a full stomach

**Chūng yùhn lèuhag fan-gaau**  
Go to sleep after taking a shower

Notice how:

- These sentences express the sequence of events in time without using a conjunction meaning 'before' or 'after' (see also Unit 19)
- The order in which the verbs come reflects the sequential order of events in real time. This is a characteristic of serial verbs (often not shared by or reflected in the English translation) which is especially clear in the constructions expressing sequence and purpose. Further examples include:

<b>Dī sailouh sīk giu sung sīhk ge la</b>	The children know how to order food to eat
<b>Bingo séung máaih fēi tái hei?</b>	Who wants to buy tickets to see a film?

## Purpose

When one action is done for the purpose of another, the verbs appear as a series:

**Ngóh yiu chēut heui saan-bouh**  
I have to go out to take a walk

**Kéuih yeuk ngóh heui gāai**  
She arranged with me to go out

**Ngóhdeih yuhng chin máaih sīhgaan**  
We use money to buy time

**Ngóhdeih chyūhn gā heui Wòhng-gām Hói-ugohn douh-ga**  
Our whole family is going to the Gold Coast for a holiday

The verb **jouh** 'do' can indicate the purpose for which something is done (acquired, used, etc.):

**Ngóh chéung léih jouh uóh ge hóubīu** I'll hire you as my bodyguard  
**Giugchaat wán ngóh jouh jiugyáhu** The police asked me to be a witness

**Nī go sung bēi léih jouh geilihm-bán** This is for you as a souvenir

The verbs of motion **lāih** 'come' and sometimes **heui** 'go' are used similarly:

**Ló lāih/heui maaih** Take them to sell  
**Yuhng lāih gaau-syū** Use it for teaching (not \***yuhng heui gaau-syū**)

Combining **jouh** and **lāih**:

**Ló lāih/heui jouh chāamháau**  
Take it as a reference

**Máaih lāih sung bēi yáhn**  
Buy to give to someone

**Nī dī sé-jó yuhng lāih jouh gaau-chòih**  
When these are written up we can use them as teaching material

## Verbs of communication

Describing an act of communication typically involves two verbs **góng** or **wah** expressing what the speaker does, and **tēng** 'hear' or **jī** 'know' the effect on the hearer:

**Ngóh góng-jó go sūn-sik héi kéuihdeih tēng** I told them the news  
**Ngóh m̄h wah léih jī** I won't tell you

See also Unit 21 on indirect speech.

## Combining serial verbs

By combining two or more of the serial verb types we can easily end up with three or more verbs in a series:

**Bōng ngóh wán jīn sé bongou**  
*(lit. help me find material write report)*  
 Get some material for me to write my report

**Doih ngóh sé senn mahh hanh kéuih**  
*(lit. replace me write letter ask after her)*  
 Write a letter on my behalf to ask how she is

**Chāhng láu héi hóm yuhng làih jonh séjhlàuh**  
*(lit. the flat build finish use come do office)*  
 When the flat is finished it will be used as an office

## Exercise 11.1

Insert a verb from the list provided – **wán, bōng, yuhng, doih**:

Example: **Ngóh go jái bōng ngóh sái ga chē**  
 My son washes the car for me

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1 <b>Ngóh hóiyh _____ léih sé</b><br><b>gaai-siuh senn</b>       | I can write a recommendation<br>letter for you |
| 2 <b>Léih yia _____ líh dá go bō</b>                             | You have to hit the ball with<br>strength      |
| 3 <b>_____ ngóh gahm jūng ā</b>                                  | Would you press the bell for me?               |
| 4 <b>Léih _____ jek yanh sáu</b><br><b>gahm-jyuh jēung jí lā</b> | Use your right hand to press the<br>sheet down |



- |    |   |  |
|----|---|--|
| 5  | <b>Chéug léih _____ lóuh lám háh yéh</b>              | Please use your brain to think a little            |
| 6  | <b>Kéuih móuh sìhgaan _____ léih séuhng-tòhug</b>     | He doesn't have time to do relief teaching for you |
| 7  | <b>Ga páau-chê _____ làih béichoi ge</b>              | The sports car is used for competition             |
| 8  | <b>Léih yiu _____ dò dĩ yìhm yip tiuh yú</b>          | Use more salt to marinate the fish                 |
| 9  | <b>Kéuih _____ jek geuk dóng-jyuh dòuh mǎh</b>        | He blocked the door with his foot                  |
| 10 | <b>Léih hó-mǎh-hóyih _____ ngóh mahuhauh kéuih a?</b> | Could you send greetings on my behalf?             |

### Exercise 11.2

Formulate a serial verb construction by adding a verb phrase:

Example: Ngóh doih kéuih \_\_\_\_\_ I'm taking his place  
 → Ngóh doih kéuih gaau yǎt tòhng I'm teaching a class for him

- |    |   |                                       |
|----|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1  | <b>Dáng ugóh bōng léih ...</b>            | Let me ... for you                    |
| 2  | <b>Kéuih heug ugóh ...</b>                | He ... to me                          |
| 3  | <b>Dī chāuchīk doi<h>h</h> kéuih</b>      | The relatives ... on his behalf       |
| 4  | <b>Yīsāng bōng ngóh ...</b>               | The surgeon ... for me                |
| 5  | <b>Gó go hohksāng gān ngóh ...</b>        | That student ... with me              |
| 6  | <b>Nī jēuug hóibou yuhng làih ...</b>     | This poster is for ...                |
| 7  | <b>Fuhmóuh waihjó jáiléui ...</b>         | Parents ... for their children's sake |
| 8  | <b>Ngóh dĩ tùhngsìh dahng ngóh ...</b>    | My colleagues are ... for me          |
| 9  | <b>Kéuih sèhngyaht deui-jyuh ugóh ...</b> | He always ... to my face              |
| 10 | <b>Kéuih pùih ngóh ...</b>                | He accompanies me ...                 |

### Exercise 11.3

Add a second verb phrase to specify the purpose of the action (**jouh**, **laih** or **heui** may be added):

Example: Ngóhdeih yuhug chíu (**laih/heui**) **máaih sìhgaan**  
 We use money (to buy time)

- 1 **Kéuih wán jek geuk ...**  
 He uses his foot ...

- 
- 2 **A-Ying ynhng sãnsin sénagwó ...**  
Ying uses fresh fruit .
- 3 **Gaausauh béi sìhgaan ngóhdeih ...**  
The professor gave us time . .
- 4 **Kéuihdeih heui leuhtsi-làuh ...**  
They went to the solicitors ...
- 5 **Dī geijé làih Hēunggóng ...**  
The reporters came to Hong Kong
- 6 **Léih mih hóu yuhng sâp bou ...**  
Don't use a wet cloth ...
- 7 **Go behngyahn múih go láihbaai dōu heui yīyún ...**  
The patient goes to the hospital every week ...
- 8 **Dī chānchik làih ngóhdeih ūkkéi ...**  
The relatives came to our house ...
- 9 **Kéuih tēuijin ngóh heui daaihhohek ...**  
He recommended me to go to the university
- 10 **Ngóh fuhmóuh làih ngóh sūkse ...**  
My parents are coming to my hall of residence ...

# UNIT TWELVE

## Aspect markers

Cantonese has a rich system of aspect markers which describe how events take place in time, offering different perspectives even on the same event. The major aspect markers **jó** and **gwo**, **gón** and **jyuh** have been introduced in *Basic Cantonese* (Units 18–19). Here we focus on some other aspect markers which express further nuances of time and action.

### The delimitative aspect: háh

The aspect **háh** (sometimes termed delimitative or tentative) means to do something 'for a little while':

Mgòl bái ngóh tái-háh  
Ngóh chéit hení hàahng-háh  
Léih sì-háh yuhng lí jek  
sái-tành-séui ā

Please let me have a look  
I'm going out for a walk  
Try using this shampoo (for a  
while)

This meaning is idiomatically reinforced by the particle **sīn** which literally means 'first':

Ngóh yin tái-háh sīn  
Dáng ngóh lám-háh sīn

I need to take a little rest  
Let me think for a moment

Some verbs can also be reduplicated together with **háh** to express an even more tentative action:

wáan play → wáan-háh play for a while → wáan-wáan-háh  
just play around  
gú guess → gú-háh have a guess → gú-gú-háh  
have a (tentative) guess

si try      → **si-háh**      have a try      → **si-si-háh**  
    have a (tentative) try

For example, with the 'down playing' particle **je**:

**Lī go baahnfat ngóh si-si-háh ge je**  
 I'm just trying out this method

**Kéuih tühng go léuihyán wáan-wáan-háh ge ja**  
 He's just playing around with that woman

Such reduplicated forms (verb-verb-**háh**) are also used in subordinate clauses, followed by another clause expressing a consequence or subsequent event:

**Ngóh lám-lám-háh, dóu haih mhóu la**  
 After thinking about it for a while, it's not a good idea

**Kéuih hàahng-hàahng-háh gāi, faatzok mgin-jó go sáu-dóí**  
 After walking for a while she discovered she had lost her handbag

**Kéuihdeih kīng-kīng-háh, sīn jīdou yùnlòih daaihgā haih jūnghohk tūnghohk**  
 Only after chatting for a while did they find out they were  
 secondary-school classmates

**Ngóh fan-fan-háh jauh séng-jó**  
 After sleeping for a while I woke up

A third format repeats both the verb and the suffix **háh**, where the reduplication reflects a meaning of repetition:

**Kéuih góng-yéh jaht-háh-jaht-háh** When he talks he keeps stuttering  
**Jáan dāng jáam-háh jáam-háh** The light keeps flickering

There are also some idiomatic expressions of this form, like **saahp-háh-saahp-háh** (which cannot be reduced to **saahp-háh**):

**Léih sèhng jīu saahp-háh-saahp-háh, haih-maih fan nh séng a?**  
 You have been in a muddle all morning. Haven't you woken up yet?

## Verb-yāt-verb

This combination with **yāt** 'one' (corresponding to verb-yi-verb in Mandarin) resembles the verbal classifier phrase (Unit 8) except that the verb here serves as its own classifier.

**tái** look → **tái-yāt-tái** take a look

**jáam** ugáahu blink → **jáam-yāt-jáam** ugáahu blink for a moment

The meaning is similar to that of **háh** as illustrated above:

**Kéuih jáang yàh hóu dô chin, lám-jyuh heui Oumún bok-yāt-bok**  
He owes people a lot of money, so he's thinking of going to Macau  
for a gamble

**Lidouh yāt chin mǎn, léih sóu-yāt-sóu ā** (or **léih sóu-háh**)  
Here's a thousand dollars; you can count it

In fast speech this sequence is often contracted so that **yāt** is not audible, resulting in a high rising tone on the first verb (see Unit 3):

**bok-yāt-bok** → **bók-bok** gamble, take a risk  
**chaat-yāt-chaat** → **cháat-chaat** rub for a while

## Verb-léuhng-verb

A variant with **léuhng** 'two' instead of **yāt** 'one', this tends to have a negative or dismissive connotation:

**Kéuih mǎh gwaan chau-jái; chau-léuhng-chau jauh mǎh chau**  
She's not used to taking care of children; she tries for a while then  
gives up

**Bún syú tái-léuhng-tái jauh móuh sâm-gēi tái-lohk-heui**  
After reading this book for a while one has no inclination to go on

**Lī deui hàaih jeuk-léuhng-jeuk jauh laahn-jó**  
These shoes have fallen apart after being worn for a short while

The same construction can also describe accomplishing something with a minimum of time and effort:

**Lí go jái gam sít, duhk-léuhng-duhk janh yahp saai lóuh**

This child is so bright, he studies a bit and it's all there in his head

**Kéuih cháau-léuhng-cháau janh jaahn-jó géi baak maahn**

After a brief bout of speculation she earned a few million dollars

### The habitual aspect: *hōi*

The aspect *hōi* generally has a habitual meaning:

**Ngóhdeih jōuh-hōi lī hòuhng**

We've been in this profession for  
some time

**Kéuih yahng-hōi gó jek pàaihjī**

He regularly uses that brand

This sense commonly appears in relative clauses (see Unit 18):

**Ngóhdeih wán-hōi gó go jōngsāu sifú taai mòhng**

The decorator we usually deal with is too busy

**Kéuihdeih jyuh-hōi gódonh hóu fóngbihn**

Where they've been living is very convenient

Less commonly, in subordinate clauses, *hōi* may have a progressive meaning, indicating continuation of an activity that has already begun:

**Ngóhdeih hàahng-hōi lībihn, bātyùh heui màaih Sihdoih**

**Gwóngchèuhng lo**

Now that we're already walking this way, let's go on to Times Square

**Góng-hōi kéuihdeih léuhng go, gaugíng yáuh-móuh lèih-fán a?**

Talking of these two, have they actually got divorced?

**Góng-hōi yauh góng ā ... (idiom)**

Talking of that, ...

### The inchoative *héi-séuhng-làih*

The phrase *héi-séuhng-làih* literally means 'rise up' but after a verb it denotes the beginning of an action (an inchoative meaning, corresponding fairly closely to *qǐlái* in Mandarin).

**Go bībī daht-yìu-gān haam héi-séuhg-làih**

The baby suddenly started to cry

It is most characteristically used in subordinate clauses, for example with **yāt** meaning 'as soon as':

**Ngóh yāt lāu héi-séuhg-làih jauh lyúu gam laauh yàhn**

As soon as I get angry I scold people indiscriminately

When used with a transitive verb or verb-object compound (Unit 6), the sequence **héi... séuhg-làih** is split up, with **héi** coming between the verb and object:

**Ngóh go jái (yāt) faat-héi-pèihhéi séuhg-làih hóuchih jek lóuhfú gám**

Once my son gets angry, he's like a tiger

**Kéuih dá-héi móhng-kàuh séuhg-làih sèhng go Jéung Dāk-pùih gám**

Once he's playing tennis he's a real Michael Chang

**The continuative lohk-heui**

The combination **lohk-heui** literally means 'go down', as when it is used following a verb of motion:

**hàahng lohk-heui** walk down**dit lohk-heui** fall down

Much as **héi-séuhg-làih** 'come up' can indicate inception of an action, **lohk-heui** (like **xiàqù** in Mandarin) following a verb can also express continuation:

**Msái joi góng lohk-heui la**

## There's no need to go on talking

**Joi siht lohk-heui jauh m̀h dihm la**

## If we go on losing (money) we'll be in trouble

This combination can combine with the potential **m̀h dóu**:

**Ngóh ngàaih m̀h dóu lohk-heui la**

I can't go on suffering

**Ngóhdeih gám yéung jounh m̀h dóu lohk-heui**

We can't go on working like this

## The particle *chân*

The particle *chân* also has two distinct meanings:

- i Habitual: 'every time' (only in subordinate clauses)

**Kéuih làih chān uóh ũkkéi dōu daai màaih jek gáu**  
Every time she comes to my house she brings the dog along

**Lí go beisyū hōi-chān-wúí dōu jóu jáu**  
Whenever there's a meeting this secretary leaves early

Because it involves quantification (meaning 'every time'), this requires the adverb *dōu* before the main verb (see Unit 15).

- ii Adversative (to one's misfortune, whether physical or psychological):

<b>dit chān</b> fall over	<b>láhng chān</b> catch a cold
<b>Ga chē jong chān jek gáu</b> <b>Kéuih chái chān ngóh</b>	The car bumped into a dog He stepped on me (my foot)

Verbs with *chāu* can typically be used as either transitive or intransitive verbs:

<i>Transitive</i> <b>Lóuhbáu haak chāu kéuih</b> The boss scared him	<i>Intransitive</i> <b>Kéuih haak chān</b> He was scared
<b>Tou hei muhn chān kéuih</b> The film bored her	<b>Kéuih hóu faai muhn chān</b> She quickly became bored

Also with the affected body part as object:

<b>Ngóh hám chān go tǎuh</b> <b>Kéuih jǐng chān jek geuk</b> <b>Léih dan chān tǐuh méih-lǔhng-gwāt àh?</b>	I bumped my head He hurt his leg/foot Did you hurt your spine?
--	--

With its adversative meaning, *chān* goes naturally with the passive (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 21):

<i>Active</i> <b>Lóuhbáu gǐk chān kéuih</b> The boss angered him	<i>Passive</i> <b>Kéuih bái lóuhbáu gǐk chān</b> He was angered by the boss
--	---



**Jek mân ngáanh chān ngóh**  
The mosquito has bitten me

**Ngóh bái jek mân ngáanh chān**  
I've been bitten by a mosquito

### Exercise 12.1

Add an aspect marker (**háh** or **hóh**) to the sentences given to produce the meaning specified in the translation.

Example: **Ngóhdeih úkkéi jyá Jūnggwok chái**  
We (regularly) cook Chinese food at home  
→ **Ngóhdeih úkkéi jyá-hóh Jūnggwok chái**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1 <b>Ngóh yiu káp sánsin hūng-hei</b>              | I need to get some fresh air (for a while)             |
| 2 <b>Ngóh sīnsāng chē ngóh fān-gūng</b>            | My husband (normally) drives me to work                |
| 3 <b>Léih yin jyuyi léih ge gihnōng</b>            | You need to pay attention to your health (for a while) |
| 4 <b>Ngóh jynh lītāuh, mē séung bān</b>            | I'm (used to) living here and don't want to move       |
| 5 <b>Ngóhdeih heni Hói-yèuhng Gūngyún wáan</b>     | We're going to have (a bit of) fun at Ocean Park       |
| 6 <b>Léih gú ngóh géi dô seni ā</b>                | (Have a) guess how old I am                            |
| 7 <b>Kénih já Yidaaihleih páan-chē</b>             | He (regularly) drives an Italian sports car            |
| 8 <b>Léih yīnggōi gōi léih ge waaih jaahpgwaan</b> | You should change your habits (a bit)                  |
| 9 <b>Kénih jeuk mīhng-pàaih sām</b>                | She (normally) wears designer clothes                  |
| 10 <b>Ngóhdeih heni tònhsyngwún chāamgwún sin</b>  | Let's go to the library to (have a) look around        |

### Exercise 12.2

Use **háh** to express the same idea as the reduplicated forms given.

Example: **Dáng ngóh wán-yāt-wán sīn** Let me take a quick look  
→ **Dáng ngóh wán-háh sīn**

- |  |                                |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 1 <b>Léih yiu lihn-yāt-lihn ī sán gō</b> | You need to practise this song |
| 2 <b>Léih heni mahh-yāt-mahh lā</b>      | Go and ask                     |
| 3 <b>Léih si-yāt-si gīn sām sīn</b>      | Try on this blouse             |

- |                                      |                                      |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 4 Ngóh yiu lám-yát-lám sìn           | I need to think about it for a while |
| 5 Mgoi léih dáng-yát-dáng sū lā      | Please wait a moment                 |
| 6 Ngóhdeih táu-yát-táu sìn           | Let's have a rest                    |
| 7 Léih mǎhn-yát-mǎhn dĩ hēungséui ā  | Smell the perfume                    |
| 8 Faai dĩ maat-yát-maat faai mihu lā | Wipe your face quickly               |

### Exercise 12.3

Use reduplication and **háh** or **léuhng** to express the meaning suggested.

Example: Kéuih fan \_\_\_\_\_ dihnwá jauh héung laak  
 She'd been sleeping for a while when the phone rang  
 → Kéuih fan-fan-háh dihnwá jauh héung laak

- 1 Ga gēi yuhng \_\_\_\_\_ jauh waaih-jó  
The machine broke down after being used once or twice
- 2 Pín mán góí \_\_\_\_\_ jauh góí hóu la  
The essay was corrected in a jiffy
- 3 Kéuih góng \_\_\_\_\_ dihnwá, yáuh yàhn hāau-mùhu  
Somebody knocked on the door while he was talking on the phone
- 4 Kéuih sihk \_\_\_\_\_ faahn dahtyihn wáhn-jó  
She suddenly fainted while eating
- 5 Kéuih sé \_\_\_\_\_ jauh sé hóu la  
He wrote it up in no time
- 6 Gihn baahk sēutsām jeuk \_\_\_\_\_ jauh wǐjōu-jó  
The white shirt got dirty after being worn once or twice
- 7 Go hohksāang séuhng \_\_\_\_\_ tòhng fan-jeuhk-jó  
The student fell asleep while attending a class
- 8 Jēung chòhng fan \_\_\_\_\_ jauh laahn-jó  
The bed broke after being slept in a few times
- 9 Ngóhdeih jyuh \_\_\_\_\_ faatgok gāan ūk lauh séui  
Having lived here for a while we discovered that the house leaks
- 10 Sū-tàih-kàhm, kéuih láai \_\_\_\_\_ jauh m̃h láai  
She played the violin for a while, then gave up

### Exercise 12.4

Use **héi ... séuhng-làih** or **lohk-heui** to give the meaning suggested in brackets.

Example: Ngóhdeih juhng hóyih kuag  
 We can still (carry on) chat(ting)  
 → Ngóhdeih juhng hóyih kīng lohk-heui

- 1 **Kéuih siu góján go yéung hóu tihm**  
Once (she starts) smiling, she looks sweet
- 2 **Ngóh m̃h hóyih joi ngàaih**  
I can't (go on) suffer(ing) any more
- 3 **Tinhei jyun, hóu yùhngyih behng**  
(Once) the weather (starts to) change, it's easy to get ill
- 4 **Léihdeih joi chòuh ngóh jauh gin gíngchaat làih**  
If you carry on making so much noise, I'll call the police
- 5 **Seui-gúk chàh-seui jauh mǎhfaahn**  
(Once) the tax office starts investigating one's taxes it's troublesome
- 6 **Gám yéung aau móuh yuhng**  
It's no use (to continue) arguing this way
- 7 **Ngóhdeih kyutdihng m̃h dáng**  
We decided not to (go on) wait(ing)
- 8 **Kéuih yāt chí-sin mǎt dǎu jǎuh dǎk chēut**  
Once he becomes crazy, he's capable of doing anything
- 9 **Kéuihdeih aai-gāau go-go dǎu hóu mhōisām**  
When they (start to) quarrel, everybody is unhappy
- 10 **Ngóh sé m̃h dǎu**  
I can't (go on) writ(e)(ing)

### Exercise 12.5

Form sentences using **chān** with an adversative or habitual sense.

Example: He angered (**gik**) me

→ **Kéuih gik chān ngóh**

Whenever we go to Guangzhou, we stay in this hotel

→ **Ngóhdeih heui chān Gwóngjǎu, dǎu jyuh nǐ gāan jáudim**

- 1 She fell over (**dít**) again
- 2 I twisted (**láu**) my foot
- 3 Whenever it rains (**lohk-yúh**), the house gets very wet (**sǎp**)
- 4 I got trodden on (**chái**)
- 5 The child tripped up (**pūk**)
- 6 Every time he drinks (**yám-jáu**) he gets drunk (**jeui**)
- 7 We got burnt (**saai**) in the sun
- 8 Every time he takes the exam (**háau-sih**) he fails (**m̃h hahpgauk**)
- 9 Don't starve (**ngoh**) the baby
- 10 Whenever he sees (**tái**) that film, he cries (**haam**)

# UNIT THIRTEEN

## Comparisons

In *Basic Cantonese* (Unit 12) we introduced comparisons using **gwo** and **béi** with adjectives:

<b>Kéuih lèk gwo ngóh</b>	She's cleverer than me (colloquial)
<b>Kéuih béi ngóh chùngmùhng</b>	She's cleverer than me (formal)
<b>Ngóh taaitáai jaahn dāk dō gwo ngóh</b>	My wife earns more than me
<b>Ngóh taaitáai béi ngóh jaahn dāk dō</b>	My wife earns more than me

Here we look at more complicated cases such as:

- comparisons based on verbs
- negating and questioning comparisons
- comparisons of similarity

We also look at expressions of excess for both adjectives and verbs.

### Comparisons with verbs

While comparisons with adjectives use **gwo**, those with verbs generally require **dō gwo** 'more than':

<b>Ngóh síhk dō gwo léih</b>	I eat more than you
<b>Ngóh jūngyi léih dō gwo (jūngyi) kéuih</b>	I like you more than (I like) her

This can also be used to contrast two different activities:

<b>Léih tái hei juhng dō gwo ngóh tái syū</b>
You watch films even more than I read books

Ngóh oi kéuih dô gwo hahn kéuih  
I love him more than I hate him

Similarly, **sáu gwo** after a verb phrase gives the meaning 'less than'

Ngóh síh sáu gwo léih	I eat less than you
Gūngsī gām-lín síht dāk sáu gwo gauh-lín	The company lost less this year than last year

## Negative and interrogative comparisons

Comparisons in the form of negative statements and questions respectively can be formed with **móuh** and its question form, **yáuh-móuh**, together with **gam** 'as':

Ngóh móuh léih gam yáuh-seunsām  
I'm not as confident as you (are)

Kéuih yáuh-móuh léih gam lengjái a?  
Is he as good-looking as you?

This pattern also works for stative verbs (see Unit 7):

Ngóh móuh léih gam jūngyi yàuh-séui  
I don't like swimming as much as you do

Yáuh-móuh léih mǎihmái gam gēng háau-síh a?  
Are you as afraid of exams as your sister?

For interrogative comparisons a simpler structure is often preferred, using **dīhng** 'or' (see Unit 17) and the comparative **dī** (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 12):

Wàihjān pèhng dī dīhng Gwoktaai pèhng dī a?  
Which is cheaper, Virgin or Cathay?

Sān gēichèuhng dīhng gauh gēichèuhng fōngbihn dī a?  
Which is more convenient, the old airport or the new one?

béihéi

The word **béihéi** is required when adding a comparison as an afterthought to a statement that has already been made:

**Kéuih gaan dāk géi hóu, béihéi kèihā yàh**  
 He teaches quite well, compared with the others

**Gām chi syun faai . . . béihéi seuhng chi làih góng**  
 This time it went quickly . . . compared to last time

Note the addition of **laih góng**, literally 'come to speak (of it)'. See also Unit 25 for similar afterthoughts.

## Comparisons of similarity

**yāt yeuhug**, literally 'one and the same' can be used to express similarity:

**Kéuih (tùhng léih) yāt yeuhug gam kùhng**  
*(lit. he (with you) one same so poor)*  
 He's just as hard up (as you are)

**chā-m-dō**, literally 'differing not much', is used generically to make approximations:

**Kéuih tùhng léih chā-m-dō (gam gōu)**  
*(lit. he with you about (as tall))*  
 He's about the same (height) as you

Note the use of **tùhng** 'with' specifying the standard of comparison in these constructions. **hóuchih** is a verb meaning 'resemble' (or 'seem') which works together with **gam** in expressions of similarity:

**Yùhgwó hóuchih léih gam hahngfūk jauh hóu la!**  
 If (I) were as fortunate as you that would be fine!

**Léih gwú ngóh hóuchih lóuhbáan gam gūhòhn mē?**  
 Do you think I'm as much of a miser as the boss?

## jeuhn 'as . . . as possible'

The word **jeuhn** (*lit.* 'exhaust') forms adverbial phrases with a superlative sense:

<b>jeuhn faai</b>	as quickly as possible
<b>jeuhu jón</b>	as soon as possible
<b>jeuhu lihk</b>	with as much effort as possible
<b>jeuhu leuhug</b>	as far as possible, to the best of one's ability

These serve as adverbs:

**Ngóhdeih wúih jeuhn faai tūngjī léih**  
We'll let you know as quickly as possible

**Ngóh wúih jeuhn leuhug hōng-sám**  
I'll do my best to help

## Excess

The most straightforward expression of excess is **taai**, which corresponds closely to Mandarin **tài** and English 'too':

<b>Dī tōng taai yíht</b>	The soup is too hot
<b>Léih jǎ dāk taai faai</b>	You're driving too fast

Another alternative is **taai gwo** which gives emphasis by combining **taai** and **gwo**:

<b>taai gwo gáandāan</b>	much too simple
--------------------------	-----------------

While **taai** is neutral in terms of register as well as intensity, other idiomatic and more distinctively Cantonese terms are **dāk jaih** and **gwotàuh**:

<b>Kéuih góng dāk faai dāk jaih</b>	He's speaking a bit too fast
<b>Dī tōng yíht gwotàuh</b>	The soup is too hot

With verbs, the corresponding expression is **gwolùhug**:

<b>fan gwolùhug</b>	oversleep
<b>jyú gwolùhug</b>	overcook
<b>sek gwolùhug</b>	spoil (a child) to death

**gihk dough** 'exceedingly' is a formal expression:

<b>gihk dough fūkjaahp</b>	exceedingly complicated
<b>gihk dough húnggeuih</b>	exceedingly fearful

## Exercise 13.1

Refute the following comparisons by using a negative comparison

Example: **Háaih gwai gwo lùhug-hā**

Crab is more expensive  
than lobster

→ **Háaih móuh lùhug-hā gam gwai** Crab is not as expensive  
as lobster

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 <b>Héi-kehk hóu-tái gwo bei-kehk</b>                  | Comedy is more fun to watch than<br>tragedy                                       |
| 2 <b>Hahtiu chéuhug gwo dīngtin</b>                     | Summer is longer than winter  |
| 3 <b>Yisāng mòhng gwo wuhsih</b>                        | Doctors are busier than nurses  |
| 4 <b>Náuyeuk jitjau faai gwo<br/>Hēunggóng</b>          | New York's pace is faster than<br>Hong Kong's                                     |
| 5 <b>Lihksí-haih yùhugyih yahp gwo<br/>jithohk-haih</b> | The history department is easier to<br>get into than the philosophy<br>department |
| 6 <b>Wohuggok bīk-yàhn gwo Jimsājéui</b>                | Mongkok is more crowded than<br>Tsimshatsui                                       |

### Exercise 13.2

Ask questions to compare the elements stated.

A: using **dī**

Example: **hùhng sīk** red vs. **wòhng sīk** yellow: **seuhu-ngáahu** pleasing  
to the eyes

**Hùhng sīk dīhng wòhng sīk seuhn-ngáahn dī a?** Is red or yellow  
more pleasing to the eyes?

- dīksí** taxi vs. **fóché** train: **faai** fast
- gātūhng** family vs. **sīhyihp** career: **jahngyiu** important
- Jūng yeuhk** Chinese medicine vs. **sāi yeuhk** Western medicine: **yáuh-haauh** effective
- daap-féigēi** flying vs. **daap-syàhn** taking the boat: **syūfuhk** comfortable
- duhk-syū** study vs. **jouh-yéh** work: **sānfú** demanding

B: using **yáuh-móuh**

Example: **yúhyihnhohk** linguistics vs. **màluhohk** literature: **làahn**  
difficult

**Yúhyihnhohk yáuh-móuh màluhohk gam làahu a?** Is linguistics as  
difficult as literature?

- go léui** the daughter vs. **go jái** the son: **pa-cháu** shy



- 7 **tái dihsih** watch television vs. **hàahng-gūngsī** shopping: **sāai-sihgaau** time-consuming  
 8 **Seuhghóih** Shanghai vs. **Bākging** Beijing: **yúhn** far  
 9 **Jūngdaaih** Chinese University vs. **Góngdaaih** Hong Kong University  
**yáuh-méng** famous  
 10 **fōwaahu pín** science fiction films vs. **húughou pín** horror films **chigik** thrilling

### Exercise 13.3

Add an appropriate expression of excess in place of **hóu**:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| Example: <b>Kéuih úkkéi hóu yúhn</b>         | It's a long way to his house                    |
| → <b>Kéuih úkkéi yúhu dāk jaih</b>           | It's a bit far to his house                     |
| 1 <b>Dī gāsi hóu pèhng</b>                   | The furniture is (too) cheap                    |
| 2 <b>Chau-jái hóu sánfú</b>                  | Taking care of children is (too) hard work      |
| 3 <b>Kéuih jyá ge sung hóu hàahm</b>         | The dishes she cooks are (too) salty            |
| 4 <b>Yiuhgwáu ugohk hóu chòuh</b>            | Rock music is (too) noisy                       |
| 5 <b>Kéuih hàahng dou hóu guih</b>           | He gets (too) tired as a result of walking      |
| 6 <b>Hēunggóng biu dāk hóu faai</b>          | Hong Kong changes (too) quickly                 |
| 7 <b>Jingfú taaidouh hóu kèuhng-ngaahn</b>   | The government's attitude is (excessively) firm |
| 8 <b>Kéuih làaih-lái hóu làahn fuhksih</b>   | Her mother-in-law is (too) hard to please       |
| 9 <b>Ngóh úkkéi ge mahatàih hóu fūkjaahp</b> | My family's problems are (too) complicated      |
| 10 <b>Siusāaug góug ge yéh hóu sām-ou</b>    | What the teacher said is (extremely) profound   |

# UNIT FOURTEEN

## Resultative and causative sentences with **dou**

Resultative sentences denote the state resulting from an action (usually a verb) or the extent of a certain state (usually an adjective). They are formed with **dou**, one of the grammatical words with many functions which are crucial to Cantonese grammar. As a verb in its own right, **dou** means 'arrive', 'reach', and also goes with other verbs to form verb-particle units like **sāu dou** 'receive'. **dou** also serves to introduce the state of affairs resulting from an event, which may be seen as an extension of the core meaning of 'getting to', 'reaching a certain state or point'. The nearest equivalent of this **dou** in English is 'until', and indeed in some cases **dou** simply means 'until':

**Yāt dím jǎng dǎng dou sāam dím** (from one of Faye Wong's songs)  
(lit. one o'clock wait till three o'clock)  
Wait from one until three o'clock

### **dou with verbs**

The resultative meaning of **dou** is 'to the point of ...' as we see here:

**Ngóh góng dou móuh saai hei**  
(lit. I talk till no all breath)  
I talked till I had no breath left

**A-Lǐng sēui dou yàhn-yàhn dōu ngāak**  
(lit. Ling bad till everyone all cheat)  
Ling is so bad that she'll cheat anyone

In the clause following **dou**, the subject is omitted if it is the same as that of the main verb:

Same subject:

<b>Kéuih guih dou hàahng mih yūk</b> ( <i>lit</i> s/he tired till walk not move)	(not *Kéuih guih dou kéuih hàahng mih yūk)
S/he was so tired that s/he couldn't move	

Different subject:

<b>Kéuihdeih chòuh dou ngóh jonh mih dóu yéh</b> ( <i>lit.</i> they noisy till I work not manage things)
They're making so much noise that I can't get any work done

### **dou with adjectives**

Since adjectives and verbs generally behave alike in Cantonese (see Unit 7), it is no surprise that we can use **dou** with adjectives as well as with verbs. Especially productive is (adjective) **dou séi** 'to death' with adjectives of emotive evaluation, typically where negative evaluation is involved:

<b>gēng dou séi</b>	scared to death
<b>wahtdaht dou séi</b>	really ugly, gross
<b>lyuhu dou séi</b>	really messy
<b>gwai dou séi</b>	really expensive
<b>tihm/syūn/fú/laht dou séi</b>	really sweet/sour/bitter/hot (e.g. of food)

While the emphatic meaning of **dou séi** is also applicable to positive evaluation, others such as **dou fēihéi** ('to the point of taking off') and **dou wàhn** ('to the point of dizziness') are often more idiomatic:

<b>Go sailouh-léni dākyl dou séi</b>	The little girl is dead attractive
<b>Gihn sām leng dou séi/dou wàhn</b>	The blouse is dead gorgeous
<b>Kéuih go jái lēk dou séi/dou fēihéi</b>	His son is fiendishly smart

... **dou jeuhn** 'to the full', 'to the limit' often appears in colloquial expressions:

<b>hok dou jeuhn</b>	do one's utmost, e.g. win the game, work hard
<b>je dou jeuhn</b>	borrow to the limit
<b>syū/yèhng dou jeuhn</b>	win/lose everything
<b>wáan dou jeuhn</b>	play to the full
<b>wái dou jeuhn</b>	super cool

For example:

**Gám chí kékúhdeih ló saai sei go jéung jánhah wái dou jeuhn la**  
 (lit. this time they got all four prizes really cool to the limit)  
 This time they got all four prizes; they're super cool

A common use of these phrases is as an answer to questions of the type  
 ... sèhng dím a? 'to what extent?'

- A: Lóuhbáan lâu sèhng dím a?**  
 How angry is the boss? (i.e. what's the extent of the boss's anger?)
- B: Láu dou síhk m̀h lohk saahn ló**  
 So angry that he can't eat anything
- A: A-Lihng lèk sèhng dím a?**  
 How smart is Ling?
- B: Lèk dou léih m̀h seun**  
 (lit. smart till you not believe)  
 Incredibly smart

Finally, **dou** can be left 'stranded' with the complement clause omitted but implied:

<b>Kéuih faai dou ā ...</b>	He's so fast
<b>Kéuih lèk dou lē ...</b>	She's so smart, you know

This gives the effect of being left speechless, with the particle drawn out for emphasis.

## Verb copying with transitive verbs

If the verb has an object, the verb has to be repeated before the **dou**-phrase:

**Ngóh laauh kéuih laauh dou bá sēng dōm sá-jé**  
 (lit. I scold him scold till the voice all hoarse)  
 I scolded him till my voice was hoarse

**Kéuih gēng lóuhpòh gēng dou m̀h gám fān ūkkéi**  
 (lit. he fear wife fear till not dare return home)  
 He's so afraid of his wife that he dare not go home

**Kéuih jouh-yéh jouh dou waih tung**  
 She worked so hard that she got stomach ache

This verb copying also applies to adverbial constructions with **dāk** (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 10).

### **dou with causative verbs**

The main causative constructions use **dou** as used in resultative sentences. **dou**-phrases combine with a number of causative verbs such as **jíng** 'make'. These have almost the same meaning but are given here in increasing order of formality: **gáau** and **jíng** are colloquial, while **líng** and **sái** are more formal.

**Dínggái gāan fóng gáau dou gam lyuhn ga?**

(lit. why the room make till so messy)

Why is the room so messy (as a result of somebody's wilful action)?

**Kéuihdeih sehngyaht dá mahjéuk jíng dou ngóh fan nh dóu**

(lit. they always play mahjong make till I cannot sleep)

Their playing mahjong prevents me from sleeping

**Syübaahkdahk ge yámagohk líhng dou yáhn sām kong sáhn yìh**

(lit. Schubert's music cause till people heart enlarged spirit content)

Schubert's music is uplifting to the human heart and spirit

**Síusik sái dou tàuhj-jé yahp síh** (financial report)

(lit. news cause investor enter market)

The news has made investors enter the market

A formal, literary way of expressing causation is the verb **douhji**:

**Léuhng paai ge daujāng douhji tàahmpun po-liht** (news report)

(lit. two parties' struggle cause negotiation break)

The struggle between the two parties caused the negotiations to break down

These causative constructions are important as they are used to express several concepts which are expressed by transitive verbs in English, such as 'please', 'excite', 'embarrass' and 'disappoint':

**Kéuih séung líhng dou lóuhbáan hōisām jē**

(lit. he wants make till boss happy only)

He just wants to please his boss

**Go bougou lihug dou ngóh hóu hūngfáhu**

(lit. the report makes till I very excited)

The report excited me (made me excited)

**Kéuih góug ge yéh jǐng dou ngóh hóu nhóuyisi**

The things he said embarrassed me (made me embarrassed)

**Ngóh nh séung lihug dou kéuih sátmohug**

I don't want to disappoint her (make her disappointed)

**Léih go behug lihug dou ngóh hóu dāamsām**

Your illness had me very worried

### †Inverted resultative sentences

A particular version of the resultative/causative construction with **dou** involves a kind of inversion of the verb and its logical subject. As an alternative to i we can have ii:

- i **Kàhm-máahn ngóh góng dou hóu gikhei**  
(lit. last night I talked till very angry)  
Last night I talked and (as a result) got very angry
- ii **Kàhm-máahn góng dou ngóh hóu gikhei**  
(lit. last night talked till I very angry)  
Last night I talked and (as a result) got very angry

This amounts to making **ngóh** the subject of the **dou**-clause rather than the main clause. Based on the inverted construction ii, we can even have the logical object of the verb at the beginning of the sentence. This object is then seen as the cause of the event:

**Pín mán tái dou Míng-jái ngóahn tung**

(lit. the paper read till Ming boy's eyes hurt)

Reading the paper makes Ming's eyes hurt

**Gám jiu di Yíng-sík jóuchān sǐhk dou ngóhdeih háau saai**

(lit. this morning's English style breakfast eat till we full all)

This morning's English breakfast filled us all up

**Dī gúpiu siht dou ngóh pā háidouh**

(lit. the shares lose till I crawl here)

Losing on shares has brought me to the ground

Some similar sentences are also possible without **dou**:

**Dī gāsi sái-jó ngóh sahþ maahn mǎn**

This furniture cost me one hundred thousand dollars

**Lī tūh sósìh wán-jó ngóh sèhng máahn**

(lit. this key search me an entire evening)

It took me an entire evening to look for this key

**Bún baatgwa jaahþþi tái-jó kéuih sèhng go hahjau**

(lit. the gossip magazine read her whole afternoon)

Reading the gossip magazine took up her whole afternoon

**Lī go jōng fa-jó ngóh léuhng go jūng**

(lit. this make-up spent me two hours)

This make-up session took two hours

**Gǎmmáahn cháan faahn jyú-jó kéuihdeih sèhng yaht**

(lit. tonight dinner cook them whole day)

It took a whole day to cook tonight's dinner

**Dī hùhngcháuh-gú siht-jó kéuih yāt baak maahn**

(lit. the red chip shares lost him a million)

The red chip shares made him lose a million

## Exercise 14.1

Form sentences using **dou**:

A: to indicate the extent of the following psychological states:

Example:

Emotion: **gámduhng dou ... haam héi séuhng làuih**

so moved ... that (she) began to cry

1 Happiness: **hōisām dou ...**

2 Fear: **gēng dou ...**

3 Anger: **lāu dou ...**

4 Frustration: **mángjáng dou ...**

5 Comfort: **syūfuhk dou ...**

B: to describe things:

1 The sea view: **Go hói-gíng leng dou ...**

2 A house: **Gāau ūk gōnjehng dou ...**

- 3 A picture: **Fūk wá daaih dou ...**  
 4 Summer in Hong Kong: **Héunggóng hahtiu yiht dou ...**  
 5 A rich person: **Kéuih dī chín dō dou ...**

## Exercise 14.2

Advertise your products as follows:

Example: **Nī go sán chítgai gūnglāhng dō dou sóu m̀h saai**  
 This new design has too many functions to count

- |                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| 1 A new medicine:         | <b>Nī jek yeuhk lihng dou</b> (makes you) ...                                     |
| 2 Prizes in a raffle:     | <b>Ngóhdeih ge jéuugbáu dō dou ...</b>  |
| 3 A television programme: | <b>Nī go jitmuhk jingchói</b> (this programme is so fabulous) <b>dou ...</b>      |
| 4 A restaurant:           | <b>Ngóhdeih jáulāuh ge dím-sām</b> (our restaurant's dim sum) <b>sihk dou ...</b> |
| 5 A book:                 | <b>Sung Fūyahn</b> (Madam Sung) <b>dī syū maaih</b> (are selling) <b>dou ...</b>  |

## Exercise 14.3

Answer the question using **dou** to indicate the extent of the situation.

Try to be as informative and detailed as possible in elaborating the extent clause.

Example: **Jéung gēipiu pèhug sèhng dím a?**  
 Just how cheap is the air ticket?  
**Pèhng dou léih m̀h seun!**  
 So cheap that you wouldn't believe it

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 <b>Jáan dāng gwai sèhng dím a?</b>                   | Just how expensive is the lamp?             |
| 2 <b>Kéuihdeih go yéung ch̀h sèhng dím a?</b>          | Just how alike are they?                    |
| 3 <b>Jek gáu behug sèhng dím a?</b>                    | How sick is the dog?                        |
| 4 <b>Go yīsāng yī kéuih yī sèhng dím a?</b>            | How's the doctor's treatment going?         |
| 5 <b>Kéuih ga chē b́ei ga fochē johug sèhng dím a?</b> | How badly was the car damaged by the lorry? |
| 6 <b>Léih hohk Jūngmán hohk sèhng dím a?</b>           | How's your Chinese doing?                   |
| 7 <b>Léih taai-tái lāu sèhng dím a?</b>                | How angry is your wife?                     |



- 8 Lèih gú kénih mōhng sèhng dím a? Guess how busy he is?

### †Exercise 14.4

Use **dou** to show that the the second clause expresses a result of the first. Begin the sentence with the italicized object.

Ngóh yám dĩ tōng I drank the soup ... sèhng sǎn hohh sweat all over

→ Dĩ tōng yám don ngóh sèhng sǎn hohh  
Drinking the soup made me sweat all over

- 1 Ngóh tái fǎng seun I read the letter ... hóu lǎu got angry
- 2 Ngóh sé pín mán I wrote the paper ... ngāau saai tàn̄h got confused
- 3 Kénih yám jēun jáu he drank the wine ... jēm-jó got drunk
- 4 Ngóh jonh go sahtyihm I did the experiment ... janhlèih chisin almost crazy
- 5 Ngóh fan jēung chòhng I slept on the bed ... hón msyūfuhk uncomfortable
- 6 Ngóh tái go dihsih I watched the television ... ngáahn fā couldn't see clearly
- 7 Kéuih tēng gó dĩ gwát-gá He listened to those ghost stories ... fan m̄h dōn can't sleep
- 8 Kénih sihk nī dĩ yeuhk He took this medicine wàhn-tòh-tòh became dizzy

# UNIT FIFTEEN

## Quantification

Quantifiers express relative quantities such as 'all', 'many', 'few', and so on. In Cantonese they involve some special syntactic patterns and an important set of particles including **dōu**, **saai**, **màaih**, **dák** and **tím**.

### All and every

The concept 'all' (universal quantification) can be expressed by:

a A reduplicated classifier, with or without the noun (see Unit 8):

<b>gāan-gāau ūk</b>	every house	<b>jek-jek duhngmaht</b>	every animal
<b>go-go (yàhn)</b>	everyone	<b>douh-douh</b>	everywhere

b **múih** 'each'

<b>múih (go) yàhu</b>	each person	<b>múih ga chē</b>	each car
<b>múih gāan ūk</b>	each house	<b>múih búu syū</b>	each book

c **só yáuh ge** 'all' (a formal alternative: see Unit 25)

<b>só yáuh (ge) yàhu</b>	everyone
<b>só yáuh (ge) sihkmaht</b>	all the food there is

When these expressions are used, two general rules should be observed:

i The adverb **dōu** is added before the verb:

<b>Go-go dōu jaan kéuih</b>	Everyone praises her
<b>Múih gāan ūk dōu yáuh láahughei</b>	Each house has air conditioning
<b>Só yáuh (ge) tùhngsih dōu yin</b>	All colleagues need to arrive on
<b>jéunsih dōu</b>	time

11 When the object of the sentence is quantified it must come before the verb

<b>Kéuih</b> <i>douh-douh</i> <b>dôu</b> <i>séung heui</i>	He wants to go everywhere
<b>Gíngchaat</b> <i>múih ga chē</i> <b>dôu</b> <i>gímchàh-gwo</i>	The police have inspected every car
<b>Haauijéung</b> <i>só yáuh ge sînsāang</i> <b>dôu</b> <i>gin-gwo</i>	The principal has met all the teachers

The resulting word order (subject-object-verb) may be compared with the focus construction in Unit 9, where the word order is similar.

In addition to the quantifiers (a-c) above, numerals may be used together with **dôu** to mean 'both', 'all three', etc.:

<b>Ngóhdeih</b> <i>léuhng go</i> <b>dôu</b> <i>heui</i>	We're both going
<b>Ngóh</b> <i>sāam gihn</i> <b>dôu</b> <i>jūngyi</i>	I like all three (pieces of clothing)

Note again the position of the object before the verb.

## Any

A question word such as **bīngō** 'who' together with the adverb **dôu** gives the meaning 'any' or 'every':

<b>bīngō</b>	who	<b>bīngō dôu</b>	anyone
<b>māt(yéh)</b>	what	<b>māt(yéh) dôu</b>	anything, everything
<b>bīndouh</b>	where	<b>bīndouh dôu</b>	anywhere

For example:

<b>Bīngō dôu</b> <i>lāih dāk</i>	Anyone can come
<b>Mātyéh dôu</b> <i>hóiyh faatsāng ge</i>	Anything can happen

Again notice the position of the object which comes before the verb:

<b>Gíngléih</b> <i>bīngō dôu háng giú</i>	The manager is willing to see anyone
<b>Héunggóng</b> <i>mātyéh yáuh</i> <b>dôu</b> <i>yáuh</i>	There are all sorts of people in Hong Kong

**yahmhòh** is a more formal expression for 'any':

<b>Yahmhòh</b> <i>yisāng dôu hóiyh jónh lí</i> <i>go sáuseuhf</i>
Any doctor can do this operation

**Yahmhòh jaahn chún ge gēiwuìh dōn nh hóyih fonggwò**  
 (lit. any earn money opportunity also can't let go)  
 One can't let go of any opportunity to make money

## None

To express 'none', 'nothing', etc., we basically add a negative word to the constructions given above meaning 'every' and 'any':

<b>Dúng Sāang bīngō dōu sīk</b>	Mr Tung knows everyone
<b>Dúng Sāang bīngō dōu nh sīk</b>	Mr Tung doesn't know anyone
<b>Ngóh māt(yéh) dōu jī</b>	I know everything
<b>Ngóh māt(yéh) dōu nh jī</b>	I don't know anything
<b>Kéuih māt(yéh) chōi dōu sīhk</b>	She eats any kind of vegetable
<b>Kéuih māt(yéh) chōi dōu nh sīhk</b>	She doesn't eat any kind of vegetable

## Many and much: dō/síu

The words **dō** and **síu** have several uses:

- with nouns:

<b>Hóu dō yàhū līn taaigihk</b>	Many people practise tai chi
<b>Béigaaú síu yīsāng sīk yī lī go behug</b>	Relatively few doctors know how to treat this disease

- as predicative adjectives:

<b>Ngóhdeih ge mahutàih hóu dō</b>	Our problems are many
<b>Dī gau jīgaak ge sīnsāang taaí síu</b>	The qualified teachers are too few

- as verbs, when they can take the aspect marker **jó** to indicate a change in quantity, or even a meaning of *excess* (too many or too few):

<b>Gūnyaht dō-jó géi go haak</b>	There were a few more clients today
<b>Jeuighahn síu-jó hóu dō yàuh-haak</b>	There have been many fewer tourists lately
<b>Dō-jó léuhng go hohksāang</b>	There were two students too many
<b>Síu-jó yāt go léihyàuh</b>	There was one reason too few

These combinations can also be added to a verb, with a similar effect:

**Ngóh waikháuh nàh hóu, síhk-sín-jó hóu dô yéh**  
My appetite is not good and I have eaten a lot less

**Kéuih hyut-ngaat gôu, yám-sín-jó hóu dô jáu**  
He has high blood pressure and drinks a lot less

**Léih chéut-dô-jó tình tàihmuhk**  
You set one question too many

**Gūngsī sung-sín-jó yāt yehng yéh làih**  
The company delivered one thing too few

When used as adverbs, **dô dĩ** 'more' and **sín dĩ** 'less' typically come before the verb like other adverbs:

**Ngóhdeih yínggòi dô dĩ wahuduhug** We should exercise more  
or **Ngóhdeih yínggòi wahnduhug dô dĩ**

**Léih bátyùh sín dĩ màaihyuu lă!** Why don't you complain less often?  
or **Léih bátyùh màaihyun sín dĩ lă!**

## Particles of quantification **saai** and **màaih**, **dāk** and **tīm**

The particle **saai** offers an idiomatic alternative way to express the idea 'all'. It follows the verb like other verbal particles:

- With transitive verbs (referring to the object):

**Ngóh yíhging dām saai dĩ gauh boujī**  
I have already thrown away the old newspapers

**Léih giu gam dô sung dím síhk dāk saai a?**  
You order so many dishes, how can we eat them up?

**Yīsāng gānjūn góng saai bái kéuih tēng la**  
The doctor told him everything this morning

**Kéuih bái yáuh ngāak saai dĩ chin**  
He got cheated and as a result lost all the money

- With intransitive verbs (referring to the subject):

<b>Dī geijé jáu saai la</b>	The reporters have all left
<b>Dī sailouhjái yájtóu jauh fan saai</b>	The children have all gone to sleep early
<b>Dī yú hóu faai séi saai</b>	The fish all died quickly
<b>Dī jēun dī saai lohk déi</b>	The bottles all fell on the floor

- With adjectives (emphasizing quality):

**Móuh gin gam loih, léih sèhng go leng saai wo**  
Haven't seen you for a long time, you've become prettier

**Dī fūng yāt chēni, léih dī tàuhfaat jauh lyuhn saai**  
Once the wind blows, your hair becomes all messy

- With verb-object compounds and idioms (usually indicating a change of state):

**lé-he** chaotic → **lé saai he** totally chaotic  
**lèih-póu** outrageous → **lèih-saai-póu** totally outrageous  
**ngāu-saai-tàuh** (*lit.* scratch one's head) brain-wrecking  
**lyuhn saai hāang** make a complete mess of things

Like other particles, **saai** can be used in combination with:

- i The aspect markers **gwo** and **jyuh** (but not **jó**):

**Ngóh wán-gwo saai hī tàuh ge daaih síu syū-dim ge la**  
I've searched all the big and small bookshops around here

**Daaih-hohk kám-jyuh saai dī chámàhn**  
The university is covering up all the scandals

**Dī sailouh chòuh-jyuh saai ngóhdeih jounh-yéh**  
The children are preventing us from doing any work (by making a noise)

- ii The comparative **gwo** (see Unit 13) and other particles such as **dóu**, **hóu** and **fān**:

<b>faai gwo saai yàhndeh</b>	faster than everyone else
<b>lêk gwo saai kèihtā hohksāang</b>	cleverer than all the other students
<b>Léih dī jīliu ngóh sán dóu saai</b>	I received all your data
<b>Go bougou sé hóu saai la</b>	The report is all done
<b>Go behngyàhn bóu fān saai la wo</b>	The patient has recovered completely

iii The potential construction in which the negative **m̃h** or the potential **dāk** is inserted between the verb and the particle (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 17):

Ngóhdeih sihk m̃h saai	We can't eat it all
Ngóhdeih sihk dāk saai	We can eat it all
Ngóhdeih sihk m̃h sihk dāk saai a?	Can we eat it all?

**saai** can also combine with other quantifiers such as **go-go dōu** and **māt(yéh) dōu**, thereby emphasizing the idea of totality:

**Yùhwó go-go dōu jáu saai, bīngó kēih Hēunggóng a?**  
(from a pre-handover television advertisement)  
If everyone leaves, who will care about Hong Kong?

**Hēunggóng māt dōu bin saai sīk** (from a film set in 1997)  
Everything in Hong Kong is changing colour

The particle **màaih**, which resembles **saai** in several respects, has a number of meanings. As a verb it means 'to approach', as in **màaih ohn** 'approach the shore' and **màaih làih** 'come closer'. As a particle (following another verb) it can mean:

i 'close'; 'together'

Sāu màaih deuh m̃hn	Close the door
Yeuk màaih dī pàhgyáuh heui	Gather the friends together to have
yám-chàh	dim sum

ii 'in addition to all the rest'

**Sihk màaih dī sung lá!**  
Let's eat up the food (in addition to what has already been eaten)

**Ngóh taai-tái bēi màaih ngóh ge wúifai**  
My wife paid my membership fees too (apart from her own fees)

**Kéuihdeih daai màaih dī sailouh heui taam pàhngyáuh**  
They bring the children along to visit some friends

Often either **saai** or **màaih** can be used, with a subtle difference in meaning:

**Ngóh yin jouh saai dī yéh sīn fāan ūkkéi**  
I have to finish doing everything before I go home

**Ngóh yiu jòuh màaih dī yéh sīn fāau ùkkéi**

I have to finish up a few more things before I go home

**dāk** 'only' applies to the following noun phrases in subject and object positions, usually with numerals:

**Dāk sāam go hohksāang yáuh-hingchemi**

Only three students are interested

**Dāk kéuih geidāk suug sāangyaht láihmaht béi ngóh**

Only she remembers to send me a birthday gift

**Ngóh chàmmáahn fan dāk yāt go jūng**

I only slept one hour last night

**Kéuih yāt go yuht jaahu dāk gó yāt maahu mán, séu-nh-síu dī a?**

(from a film)

He only earns ten thousand dollars a month, isn't that too little?

If the verb has two objects, **dāk** comes after the verb, even when its meaning of 'only' applies to the second object:

**Yihp gaausaah gaau dāk ngóh yāt go hohkkèih ja**

Professor Yip only taught me for one term

Note that the particle **je/ja** with its meaning of 'playing down' goes naturally with **dāk**.

While **dāk** indicates that expectations have not been reached, **tím** or **tím** suggests that they have been exceeded. The high falling tone **tím** is used at the end of a sentence (see Unit 2).

**Dī tōng gam hóu meih, ngóh séung yám dô yāt wúu tím**

The soup's so tasty, I'd like to have another bowl

The meaning is often reinforced by the adverb **juhug** and/or the verbal particle **màaih**:

**Kéuih yaah yáuh-jó, juhug wah mhaih yi-ngoih tím!**

She's pregnant again, and she says it's not an accident either!

**Kéuih chéng ngóh síhk-faahn, juhug sung màaih ngóh fāau ùkkéi tím**

He took me to dinner and brought me back home too



## Exercise 15.1

Insert **dōu** before the verb as follows:

Example: **Kéuih go-go hoksāang bēi 'A' ge**  
 → **Kéuih go-go hoksāang dōu bēi 'A' ge**  
 He gives every student an 'A'

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 <b>Kéuih mātých beimaht jī ge</b>                   | She knows every secret                         |
| 2 <b>Gāu-gāu gūngsī mōnh sūsik</b>                    | There's no news from any of the companies      |
| 3 <b>Ngóh go-go jīh mēh sik duhk</b>                  | I don't know how to read every word            |
| 4 <b>Ngóh fuhmóuh go-go jáiléui gam sek</b>           | My parents love all their children             |
| 5 <b>Kéuih fún-fúu sǎn chē mēh móhnyi</b>             | He is dissatisfied with all the new car models |
| 6 <b>Lóuhbáan tīnh-tīnh sou gai dǎk hóu chīngchó</b>  | The boss calculates every sum accurately       |
| 7 <b>Kéuih go-go yuht jéusǎh gāu-jǒu</b>              | He pays the rent on time every month           |
| 8 <b>Kéuih chí-chí jāang-jyuh màaih-dān</b>           | Every time he fights to foot the bill          |
| 9 <b>Só yáuh ge gwai-bān chók saai háidouh</b>        | All the VIPs are sitting here                  |
| 10 <b>Só yáuh ge jyuyihhk jaahpjūng hái léih dōuh</b> | All the attention is centred on you            |

## Exercise 15.2

Quantify the noun with classifier in the Cantonese sentence and make the necessary changes to the sentence to express the meaning in the English translation given.

Example: **Ngóh tong-jó tīuh fu la** I've ironed the trousers  
**Ngóh tīuh-tīuh fu dōu tong-jó la** I've ironed all the trousers  
 or  
**Tīuh-tīuh fu ngóh dōu tong-jó la**

- |  |                                |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 1 <b>Go sǐgēi yáuh tūnghàhng-jǐng</b>  | Every driver has the permit    |
| 2 <b>Ngóh jūngyi jek mān</b>           | I like every cat               |
| 3 <b>Gān jáulǎuh ngóhdeih heui-gwo</b> | We've been to every restaurant |

- |    |                              |  |
|----|------------------------------|--|
| 4  | Kéuih sîk daap tinh tàihmuhk | She knows how to answer every question |
| 5  | Ngóh jek sáuji tung dou séi  | All my fingers hurt like mad           |
| 6  | Fūng seun tái saai la        | I've finished reading all the letters  |
| 7  | Fūk wá hóu yáuh-yisā         | Every picture is full of meaning       |
| 8  | Sáu gō hóu ngāam-tēng        | All the songs are good to listen to    |
| 9  | Pō syuh yáuh jeukjái jyuh ge | Every tree has birds living in it      |
| 10 | Dihp choi hóu hēung          | Every dish of vegetables smells good   |

### Exercise 15.3

Use *dō/siu*, *dō/siu dī* or *dō-jó/siu-jó* as appropriate to mean 'more' or 'less'.

Example: Ngóh séung chēut gāai I want to go out (less)

Ngóh séung siu dī chēut gāai or Ngóh séung chēut sín dī gāai

- |    |  |   |
|----|--|---|
| 1  | Léih yiu tūhng jái léui kīnggái          | You need to talk to your children (more)                      |
| 2  | Ngóhdeih chéng-jó yāt wàih tái ge yàhn   | We've invited one (more) table of people                      |
| 3  | Gāmyaht làih-jó go gīndīng               | One shareholder (too few) came today                          |
| 4  | Léih hó-mh-hóyih góng dī, jounh dī a?    | Could you talk a bit (less) and do a bit (more)?              |
| 5  | Léih jeui hóu dá mǎh-jénk                | You had better play (less) mahjong                            |
| 6  | Chéng léih gwāansām háh ūkkéi yàhn       | Please take (more) care of your family                        |
| 7  | Ngóh séung làuh hái ūkkéi yāusik háh     | I'd like to stay at home to rest (more)                       |
| 8  | Jeui gahn sikh-jó Sāigung dī hōisām      | Recently we've been eating (less) Sai Kung seafood            |
| 9  | Héunggóng gām lín syúga hóu dō yàuh-haak | This summer there have been many (more) tourists in Hong Kong |
| 10 | Gāan ūk yāt go fóng, yāt go gūngyàhn     | The house has one (more) room and one (less) maid             |

### Exercise 15.4

Add *saai* or *màaih* as appropriate.

Example: Ngóhdeih daai màaih dī sailouh heui douh-ga

We're taking the children (along) on holiday

**Ngóhdeih daai saa dĩ sailouh heui douh-ga**  
We're taking (all) the children on holiday

- 1 **Yám \_\_\_\_\_ dĩ tōng kéuih lá**  
Drink up (all) the soup
- 2 **Jáu jīchūn yiu tái \_\_\_\_\_ fahn bougou**  
I have to read (the whole of) the report before leaving
- 3 **Léih yiu béi \_\_\_\_\_ gām go yuht ge jōu**  
You have to pay this remaining month's rent
- 4 **Faai dĩ sihk \_\_\_\_\_ dĩ hā kéuih lâ**  
Eat up the (remaining) shrimp
- 5 **Ngóh chéng \_\_\_\_\_ ngóh go jái dĩ pàhngyáuh**  
I'm inviting my son's friends (too)
- 6 **Léih yiu béi \_\_\_\_\_ gām go ynht ge jōu**  
You have to pay (the whole of) this month's rent
- 7 **Yám \_\_\_\_\_ dĩ tōng kéuih lâ**  
Drink up (the rest of) the soup
- 8 **Faai dĩ sihk \_\_\_\_\_ dĩ hā kéuih lâ**  
Eat up the (whole plate of) shrimp
- 9 **Ngóh chéng \_\_\_\_\_ ngóh go jái dĩ pàhngyáuh**  
I'm inviting (all) my son's friends
- 10 **Jáu jīchūn yiu tái \_\_\_\_\_ fahn bougou**  
I have to read (the rest of) the report before leaving

# UNIT SIXTEEN

## Negative sentences

In this unit we focus on aspects of negative sentences, in particular, words which have special meanings or functions in negative sentences. These are sentences including the main negative words coming before the verb (*Basic Cantonese*, Unit 14):

<b>mh</b>	not	<b>Ngóh mh jausihng</b>	I don't approve
<b>móuh</b>	haven't	<b>Kéuih móuh wáu-gwo ngóh</b>	He hasn't contacted me
<b>meih</b>	not yet	<b>Meih yáuh síusik</b>	There is no news yet
<b>mhóu</b>	don't	<b>Mhóu gam sēungsām lă</b>	Don't be so sad

A number of words when used in negative sentences have meanings different from their usual meanings.

### Negative word + joi no longer

The adverb **joi** 'again' in conjunction with a negative word gives the meaning 'no longer':

**Lī bouh gēi mh joi chēut ge la**  
This machine is no longer produced

**Ngóhdeih móuh joi dehug lí fahn bouj**  
We don't order this newspaper any more

**Mgōi léih mhóu joi tàih-héi kéuih**  
Please don't mention him any more

**Ngóh mh hóyih joi yán lohk-heui**  
I can't stand it any longer

**Léih msái joi mǎhn-jyuh ngóh la**

You don't need to hide it from me any more

**jyuh in negative sentences**

The aspect marker **jyuh** normally attaches to a verb to indicate continuous aspect (ongoing actions: see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 19). In negative sentences, it comes at the end of the clause and means 'not . . . yet' or 'for the time being':

**Ngóh nǎh fān ùkkéi jyuh**

I'm not going home yet

**Léih mhóu góng bái yǎhn tēng jyuh**

Don't tell anyone yet

**Máih jáu jyuh!**

Don't go yet!

**Ga chē meih jǎ dǎk jyuh**

The car can't be driven yet

**Ngóhdeih jaahmsih msái bǎn jyuh**

We don't need to move for the time being

Although characteristic of negative sentences, this usage also appears in positive sentences together with the particle **sīn**:

**Léihdeih sīhk jyuh sīn; msái dǎng ngóh**

You keep eating for the moment; no need to wait for me

**Léih tóuh-ngóh maih máaih dī yéh dǐng jyuh sīn lǎ** (overheard on the underground)

If you're hungry, buy something to keep you going

**Indefinite question words**

The 'wh-words' as used in wh-questions (**hīngó** 'who', **mǎtyéh** 'what', etc.) appear in negative sentences with special 'indefinite' meanings as follows:

	<i>In questions</i>	<i>In negative sentences</i>
<b>hīngó</b>	who?	anyone
<b>mǎtyéh</b>	what?	anything
<b>bīndouh</b>	where?	anywhere
<b>dím (yéung)</b>	how?	in any way
<b>gái (dō)</b>	how many?	many, much

In the negative sentences concerned, there is typically a negative word such as **mǎh** or **móuh** preceding the question word:

<b>Móuh bīngó wúih gam chéun ge</b>	Hardly anyone would be so stupid
<b>Léih gāmyaht móuh mātých jounh</b>	You don't have anything much to do today
<b>Ngóhdeih móuh bīndouh heui</b>	We don't have anywhere much to go
<b>Ngóh móuh dím (yéung) lám-gwo</b>	I hardly gave it any thought
<b>Móuh géi dô sīhgaau jīhng</b>	There's not much time left

Note that the meaning is 'hardly at all' rather than 'not at all' which is expressed using **dōu** (see Unit 15):

<b>Ngóhdeih mēh wúih heui bīndouh</b>	We won't go anywhere much
<b>Ngóhdeih bīndouh dōu mēh wúih heui</b>	We won't go anywhere at all

The difference is brought out in cases where it is spelt out that something, however little, is done:

**Léih gāmyaht móuh mātých jounh, jīhghauih yiu dá fūng seuu jēk**  
You don't have anything much to do today, just type up a letter

**Ngóh mēh wúih dím fáandei, bātgo ngóh wúih góng dī mahutàih  
béi yàhn tēng**  
I won't exactly object, but I'll tell people about the problems

**Gām-lín jauhsyun gā yàhngūng, dōu mēh wúih gā géi dô**  
This year even if there's a pay rise, it won't be much

The contexts in which these indefinite meanings apply are not limited to negation itself, but also include other 'negative polarity' contexts such as:

i Conditional sentences (see Unit 20):

**Yūhgwó yáuh mātých mtóh, jīkhāak wah ugóh jī**  
If anything is wrong, let me know immediately

**Yūhgwó bīngó msyūfuhk, jeuhn faai chēut sēng**  
If anyone is unwell, they should say so as soon as possible

ii 'Yes/no' questions:

**Yáuh-móuh bīngó séung tái-háh lí go móhngyīp a?**  
Is there anyone who wants to have a look at this web page?

**Léih yáuh-móuh mātých sāangyaht yuhumohug a?**  
Do you have any birthday wish?

## Conjunction in negative sentences: neither . . . nor

There are no words corresponding to 'neither . . . nor'. Instead, a conjunction of two negative clauses is used, using **yauh** . . . **yauh**:

**Kéuih yauh mih fūk ngóh ge seun yauh mih fūk ngóh ge dihnwá**  
He neither replies to my letters nor returns my calls

**Kéuihdeih yauh mómh chín yauh mómh mín**  
They have neither money nor face

This corresponds to **yauh** . . . **yauh** in positive sentences meaning 'both . . . and':

**Kéuih yauh jūngyi duhk-syū yauh jūngyi wahnduhng**  
She enjoys both studying and sports

## The auxiliaries **yi** and **msái**

Recall that the auxiliary **yi** 'need', 'have to' has **msái** as its negative counterpart (*Basic Cantonese*, Unit 20).

<b>Ngóh gāmyaht yi fān-hohk</b>	I have to go to school today
<b>Ngóh gāmyaht msái fān-hohk</b>	I don't have to go to school today

The form **sái** without the negative prefix occurs only in rhetorical questions (see Unit 17):

<b>Sái léih gaau ngóh àh?</b>	<b>Juhng sái góng mē?</b>
As if I need you to teach me that!	Needless to say!

Here the negation is implied by the rhetorical question.

## Exercise 16.1

Express the following using **joi** together with the appropriate negative word

Example: I'm no longer learning Thai (**hohk Tai-mán**)  
→ **Ngóh mómh joi hohk Tai-mán**

- 1 He no longer sees that doctor (**gó go yīsāng**)
- 2 Don't go on deceiving yourself (**ngāak jihgēi**)

- 3 This matter cannot drag on any longer (**tō lohk-hei**)
- 4 Don't be so naughty (**yáih**) any more
- 5 His wound (**sēunghán**) does not hurt (**tung**) any more
- 6 She hasn't been throwing tantrums (**faat-pèihheí**) any more today
- 7 You don't need to explain (**gáai-sik**) any more
- 8 We don't need to take care of them any more (**jiugu kéuihdeih**)

### Exercise 16.2

Negate the sentences using the appropriate negative word together with **jyuh** to give the meaning specified.

Example: **Màaih dāan lā** (Don't) pay the bill (yet)  
 → **Mhóu màaih dāan jyuh (lā)** (Don't) pay the bill (yet)

- 1 **Sāu-sín lā** (Don't) hang up (yet)
- 2 **Ngóh dásyun bün ũk** I'm (not) planning to move house (yet)
- 3 **Sāu màaih fūng seun lā** (Don't) put the letter away (yet)
- 4 **Ngóhdeih heui dāk ge la** We can(not) go (yet)
- 5 **Faht go hohksāang lā** (Don't) punish the student (yet)
- 6 **Dá hoi di láihmaht lā** (Don't) open the presents (yet)
- 7 **Sénhng chòhng fan-gaan lā** (Don't) go to bed (yet)
- 8 **Kéuih wán dóu gūng** She has (not) found a job (yet)
- 9 **Léih yinggōi fonghei** You should (not) give up (yet)
- 10 **Ngóh yiu hohk Póutūngwá** I (don't) need to learn Putonghua (yet)

### Exercise 16.3

Add a wh-word in its indefinite sense.

Example:  
**Léih wúih-nh-wúih hauhfui a?** Do you regret it (in any way)?  
 → **Léih wúih-nh-wúih (dím) hauhfui a?**

- 1 **Ngóh móuh gáp sih**  
I don't have (much) urgent business
- 2 **Léih gāmyaht yáuh-móuh heui máaih-sung a?**  
Did you go (anywhere) shopping today?
- 3 **Hóí-gwān nh wúih chàh léih ge**  
They won't inspect you (much) at the customs
- 4 **Yúhwó léih móuh mahntáih, ngóhdeih yìhgá hóyih chím yeuk**  
If you don't have (any) questions, we can sign the contract now



- 5 **Lónhbáan n̄h wúih laauh léih ge**  
The boss won't scold you (in any way, much)
- 6 **Yùhgwó yáuh tàuhson, hóyih dá lí go lāmbá**  
If you have (any) complaints, you can dial this number
- 7 **Kéuih yáuh-móuh chānchik hóyih jiugu kéuih ga?**  
Does he have (any) relatives who can take care of him?
- 8 **Yùhgwó léih heui léuih-hàhng, geidāk daai màaih ngóh heui**  
If you go on holiday (anywhere), remember to take me along with you
- 9 **Ngóhdeih móuh chin sái**  
We don't have (much) money to spend
- 10 **Móuh yàhn làih taam ngóh**  
Nobody (much) comes to visit me

# UNIT SEVENTEEN

## Questions and answers

### Disjunctive questions

Questions of the form 'A not A' are the usual way to ask 'yes/no' questions (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 23):

<b>Tóuh-nh-tóuh-ngeh a?</b>	Are you hungry?
<b>Léih wán-nh-wán dóu kéuih a?</b>	Did you find him?

Questions of the form 'A or B?' are formed with **dihng** or **dihnghaih**:

**Léih béi yih-n-gām dihng chīm-kāat a?**  
Will you pay with cash or credit card (*lit.* sign a card)?

**Léih séung gāmyaht heui dihghaih tīngyaht sīn heui a?**  
Do you want to go today or not until tomorrow?

**Yáuh yàhn mahn gaugíng yāt go Jūnggwok dihng léuhng go Jūnggwok wóh**  
People are asking if there is really one China or two Chinas

This should not be confused with other conjunctions meaning 'or' which are used in statements but not in questions:

i **yāthaih ... yāthaih** 'either ... or'

**Ngóhdeih yāthaih lánh hái Hēunggóng yāthaih bun faan Yīnggwok**  
Either we stay in Hong Kong or we move back to England

**Léih yāthaih jīhgei jowh saai kéuih, yāthaih dáng ngóh jowh saai kéuih**  
Either you do it all yourself or let me do it all myself

ii **waahkjé ... waahkjé** 'maybe ... or maybe'

**Ngóh waahkjé fíngyaht wán léih, waahkjé hauhyaht**  
Maybe I'll contact you tomorrow, or maybe the day after

**Ngóh waahkjé jyú-faahn waahkjé chēut heni sihk**  
Maybe I'll cook or maybe I'll go out to eat

As the examples suggest, **yāthaih** represents a definitive choice (as in an ultimatum) while **waahkjé** is more tentative and suggests indecision.

### Particle questions: **mē** and **àh**

The particles **mē** and **àh** turn a statement into a question of a particularly loaded kind. **mē** indicates surprise that something should be the case ('How can this be true?'):

**Gám dōu lām nh̄h dōu ge mē?**  
(lit. such even think not succeed really)  
Couldn't you even think of that?

**Lī dī yéh dōu yiu ngóh léih mǎaih ge mē?**  
(lit. these things even need me deal with as well really)  
You mean I even have to deal with this stuff?

**àh** suggests surprise and often an element of disapproval ('If this is true I don't think much of it'):

**Gám chin ge dōuhléih dōu nh̄h mǐhng àh?**  
Can't you even understand such a simple principle?

**Kéuh dōu yìhgā dōu nh̄h háng yùhaleuhng léih àh?**  
Is he still unwilling to forgive you even now?

The element of disbelief in such questions can be reinforced by beginning the question with **mtúng** 'can it be':

**Mtúng yiu ngóh jōuh saai mē?**  
Could it be that I have to do it all myself?

**Mtúng yiu ngóh jōuh saai àh?**  
Do you mean I have to do it all myself?

Here **mtúng** suggests that the proposition is ridiculous. It can also mean 'could it be ...' in a context of guesswork:

**Kéuihdeih jeunigahn sèlungyaht yāitchàih; mtúng kéuihdeih paak-gáu-tō?**  
They're always together these days; could it be that they're dating?

Note that **àh** appears in 'disguised' forms such as **gàh** and **làh** as a result of contraction (see Unit 23).

## Negative questions

A difficulty here is how to answer questions in the negative using **mē** and **àh**. The word **haih** literally means 'such is the case' and therefore has the effect of agreeing with the premise of the question:

A: **Léih gāmyaht msái fāan-gūng mē?** Don't you have to go to work today?  
B: **Haih a, msái** No, I don't

To disagree with the premise **mhaih** ('such is not the case') is used, corresponding to English 'yes' (much to the confusion of English speakers):

B: **Mhaih a, yiu** Yes, I do

The particle **ak** with its abrupt ending is often used to emphasise the disagreement:

A: **Léih móuh yéh jòuh ge mē?** Don't you have any work to do?  
B: **Mhaih ak!** Yes I do! (Why would you think that?)

The **haih** or **mhaih** is often followed by an affirmation which includes the predicate of the original question, or elaborates on it:

A: **Léih meih fa hóu jōng àh?** Haven't you finished putting on your make-up?  
B: **Haih a, juhug yáuh pàaih** No, I'll be a while yet  
A: **Ngóhdeih móuh saai jí làh?** Haven't we got any paper?  
B: **Mhaih ak, juhug yáuh dazih bá** Yes we do, we have plenty

## Multiple questions

It is possible to have two or more question words in the same sentence

**Bīngō máaih-jó mǎtyéh láihmaht a?** Who bought what present?

Confronted with a sick patient, a doctor might ask:

**Léih géisìh hái bīndouh síhk-gwo dī mǎtyéh a?**  
What did you eat where, and when?

The answer might be:

**Kàhm-máahn hái jáudim síhk-gwo gāi-faahn; gām jīu hái úkkéi síhk jūk**  
Last night I had chicken rice at the hotel; this morning I had congee at home

Such multiple questions are also likely to appear as indirect questions (see Unit 21):

**Ngóh mǎh jī bīngō gwaai bīngō**  
I don't know who's blaming whom

**Ngóh mǎh geidāk ngóhdeih hái bīndouh jōuh-jó dī mǎtyéh**  
I don't remember what we did where

Note the use of **dī** here to indicate that **mǎtyéh** refers to more than one thing (see Unit 8).

## Rhetorical questions

A major function of questions is to make a point, without necessarily expecting an answer. Each of the question words can be so used:

**Bīngō wah ngóh mǎh síhk dāk yīn ga?**  
Who says I can't smoke?

**Gam háh, ngóh dím tái dóu a?**  
How can I see when it's so dark?

**bīndouh** 'where' (or simply **bīm**) is especially prone to such rhetorical uses even when no actual place is involved:

**Ngóh hūndouh máaih dāk héi a?**

How can I afford (to buy) it?

**Bīndouh yáuh yàhn wah léih n̄h leng a?**

When (*lit.* where) has anyone said you're not beautiful?

**Ngóh hūndouh (or géisāh) yáuh góng-gwo gā yàhn-gūng a?**

When did I say anything about raising salaries?

**mātyéh** 'what', or its short form **māt**, can be inserted into a word or phrase to make a rhetorical question:

**Faat mātyéh pèihhei a?**

What are you getting angry about?

**Juhng góng mātyéh siu a?**

What are you still joking about?

The form **sái māt** 'what's the use?' is a rare case of **sái** 'need' appearing without its negative prefix:

**Sái māt tūhng kéuih gam haakhei a?**

What's the use of being so polite with him?

Colloquially, **gwái** (see Unit 24) can appear in place of a wh-word in rhetorical questions:

**Gwái giu léih gám n̄h síusām àh!**

(*lit.* devil asked you to be so careless)

Serves you right for being so careless

**Gwái n̄h mohng kéuih móuh dāk síngjāk**

(*lit.* devil not hope s/he not have promote)

Everyone hopes that she doesn't get promoted

**Ngóh chók gam hauh, tái gwái dóu mē?**

(*lit.* I sit so back, see devil succeed really)

How can I see when I'm sitting so far back?

## Exercise 17.1

Offer someone a choice of the form 'A or B?'

A Using **dihng**

Example: congee (**jūk**) or rice (**faahn**)

**Léih séung sikk jūk dihung faahn a?**

Do you want to eat congee or rice?

- 1 working (**jeuh**) a day shift (**yaht-gāang**) or night shift (**yeh-gāang**)
- 2 taking leave (**fong-ga**) this year (**gām-lín**) or next (**chêut-lín**)
- 3 classical music (**gúdn yāmugohk**) or pop music (**lauhnhàhng yāmugohk**)
- 4 seeing a Chinese (**jūng-yī**) or Western doctor (**Sāi-yī**)
- 5 staying in a private hospital (**sīgā yīyún**) or a public hospital (**gūnglahp yīyún**)

B: using **yāthaih ... yāthaih**

Example: wearing a raincoat (**jeuk yúhlāu**) or carrying an umbrella  
(**daai bá jě**)

→ **Léih yāthaih jeuk yúhlāu yāthaih daai bá jě**

- 6 paying the rent immediately (**jíkhāak gāu jóu**) or moving out immediately (**jíkhāak bün jáu**)
- 7 studying arts (**màhn-fō**) or studying science (**léih-fō**)
- 8 going with me (**tàhng ngóh yāthaih heui**) or going by yourself (**jihgéi heui**)
- 9 hiring a maid (**chéng gūngyàhn**) to look after the child (**chau-jái**) or doing it by yourself (**jihgéi chau**)
- 10 taking early retirement (**tàih jóu teuiyáu**) or going part-time (**jyun part-time**)

**Exercise 17.2**

Answer the following negative questions. Give both an affirmative answer (agreeing with the premise of the question) and a negative one (disagreeing).

Example: **Léih meih wuhn sām àh?** Haven't you changed (clothes) yet?

**Haih a, juhug meih wuhn** No, I haven't

**Mhaih ak, wuhn-jó ge la** Yes, I have

- 1 **Mát kéuih móuh wah léih jī mē?** What, didn't he tell you?
- 2 **Léih yaht-yaht dōu msái chau-jái gah?** Don't you ever have to look after your child?
- 3 **Mát léih móuh heui hoi-wúi mē?** What, didn't you go to the meeting?
- 4 **Chisó móuh saai chíj làh?** Isn't there any paper left in the lavatory?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 5 Léih móuh ngóh sán-tàih dihuwá houhmáh mē?                         | Don't you have my mobile number?   |
| 6 Léih msái dá-dihuwá fāu ūkkéi mē?                                  | Don't you have to call home?   |
| 7 Kéuihdeih git-jó-fān gam loih, juhug meih yáuh bìhbi àh?           | They have been married for so long and still don't have a baby?              |
| 8 Kéuih jek geuk tung-jó gam loih juhug mih háng heui tái yisāng àh? | His foot has been hurting for so long and he still won't go to see a doctor? |

### Exercise 17.3

Pose a rhetorical question to suggest the same idea as the negative sentence given. Use a wh-word such as *bīn(douh)*, *dím*, *géisih*, *māt* or the expletive *gwái*.

Example: **Yīnggwok móuh doihsyá**  
 There are no kangaroos in England  
 → **Yīnggwok bīn(douh) yáuh doihsyá a?** or  
**Yīnggwok díu wáih yáuh doihsyá a?**  
 Of course there aren't kangaroos in England

- |                                  |                              |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 Ngóh tēng mih dón              | I cannot hear                |
| 2 Móuh yáhn bōng kéuih           | Nobody helps him             |
| 3 Ngóh móuh ngāak-gwo léih       | I've never cheated you       |
| 4 Ngóhdeih gāmyaht jonh mih sani | We can't finish today        |
| 5 Msái kéuih gaau ngóh           | I don't need him to teach me |
| 6 Léih msái gam hóu sām la       | You don't need to be so kind |



# UNIT EIGHTEEN

## Relative clauses

Relative clauses are essentially a sentence modifying a noun, as in 'the things that you like to eat', where 'that you like to eat' modifies 'the things'. In Cantonese, the relative clause comes **before** the noun it modifies. There are two ways to form such a relative clause:

a With **ge** linking the clause to the noun:

**Duhk Dákmán ge hohksāang juhng meih dou**  
(lit. study German that students have not arrived yet)  
The students who study German have not yet arrived

**Léih jyú ge sung béi ngóhdeih síhk saai la**  
(lit. you cook that dishes by us eat all)  
The dishes you cook have been eaten up by us

These clauses refer to students and dishes in general, rather than to particular individual students or dishes. The use of **ge** here is much like using an adjective to modify the noun (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 9), and it is useful to compare an attributive adjective with a simple relative clause:

**chúngmúhng ge hohksāang**  
intelligent students, students who are intelligent

**cháamgā ge hohksāang**  
the students (who are) taking part

The constructions with **ge** correspond closely to the Mandarin ones with **de**, and are especially appropriate in more formal contexts where the grammar of written Chinese is followed.

b Using *gó* 'that' and the appropriate classifier:

*Kàhmyaht dou gó fūng seun hái bīndouh a?* (classifier: *fūng* for letters)  
Where's the letter that arrived yesterday?

*Ngóhdeih seuhng chí tái gó tou hei ló-gwo jéung ga* (classifier: *ton* for films)  
The film we saw last time had received an award

Because it includes both *gó* meaning 'that' and a classifier, a relative clause of this kind refers to a specific item: 'the ... which ...', not 'any ... which ...'. For more than one item, the plural classifier is used (*gó dĩ*; see Unit 8):

<i>Yám-chàh gó dĩ yàhn</i>	The people who are having dim sum
<i>Kàhmyaht yíng gó dĩ séung</i>	The pictures we took yesterday

This type of relative clause with classifier is relatively colloquial.

Note how the noun itself can be dropped when its identity is clear from the context:

*Ngóh haih kàhmyaht dá-díhnwá làih gó go*  
I'm the one who called yesterday

*Ngóh séung wán gó dĩ haih gám yéung ge*  
The ones I'm looking for are like that

This is a natural extension of the use of a classifier to stand for a noun, as in *lí dĩ* 'these (ones)' (see Unit 8).

## Relative clauses and topicalization

Sometimes a relative clause will come after the verb, especially when the relative clause modifies the object of the verb:

*Ngóh m̃h s̃ik tēng s̃insāang góng gó dĩ Yīngmán*  
I don't understand the English the teacher speaks

*Kéuih jūngyi tái Gāmyūhng sé gó dĩ móuhhahp síusyut*  
She likes to read the martial arts novels written by Jin Rong

Such sentences tend to become clumsy especially when a further phrase is added after the object:

**Léih báai-jó ngóh gānjū máaih gó dĩ boují hái bīndouh a?**

(lit. you put I this morning bought newspapers at where)

Where did you put the newspapers I bought this morning?

**Ngóh ló-jó gó yaht hái Gwóngchēuhng máaih gó gihn sām heui gōn-sái**

(lit. I took that day at shopping mall buy that blouse go dry clean)

I took the blouse I bought the other day in the mall for dry cleaning

The solution to this problem is to make the object the topic of the sentence, complete with the relative clause modifying it:

**Ngóh gānjū máaih gó dĩ boují, léih báai-jó hái bīndouh a?**

The newspapers I bought this morning, where did you put (them)?

**Gó yaht hái Gwóngchēuhng máaih gó gihn sām, ngóh ló-jó heui gōn-sái**

(lit. that day at shopping centre buy that blouse I took to dry clean)

I took the blouse I bought the other day at the shopping centre for dry cleaning

As the comma suggests, one can (but need not) pause to catch breath between the topic and the rest of the sentence (on topicalization in general, see Unit 9 and *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 22).

## Subject and object relatives

Within the relative clause, the noun being modified may have the role of subject or object:

**Jíchih ngóhdeih ge pàhngyáuh**

(lit. support us that friends)

friends that support us (pàhngyáuh = subject of jíchih)

**ngóhdeih jíchih ge pàhngyáuh**

(lit. we support that friends)

friends that we support (pàhngyáuh = object of jíchih)

In addition, one might wish to form relative clauses like 'the friends to whom we lend money' in which 'the friends' are the indirect object of the verb 'lend'. This can be done but a 'resumptive' pronoun is needed, referring to the following noun:

**A-Yīng je chin béi kéuihdeih gó dī tūhngsìh mē seun dāk gwo ga**  
 (lit. Ying lend money to them those colleagues not trustworthy)  
 The colleagues Ying lent money to are not trustworthy

**Ngóh sung láihmaht béi kéuih gó go gaausauh haih go mahtléih-hohk-gā**  
 (lit. I gave gift to him that professor is a physicist)  
 The professor I gave a present to is a physicist

Similarly when the noun is the object of a coverb such as **tūhug** (Unit 7):

**Ngóh tūhng kéuih yáichàih bátyihp gó go tūhng-hohk joush-jó gōu-gwūn**  
 (lit. I with her graduated that classmate has become a senior official)  
 The classmate I graduated with has become a senior official

The pronoun is also needed when the noun is an object followed by a complement clause:

**Ngóh gin-gwo kéuih tiu-móuh gó go tūhugsìh gām jiu dá-dihnwá làih**  
 (lit. I saw him dance that colleague this morning called)  
 The colleague who I saw dancing called this morning

**Gūngsī gou kéuih kwāi hūng gūngfún gó go jīkyàh chih-jó-jik**  
 (lit. the company sued him embezzlement that employee has resigned)  
 The employee whom the company sued for embezzlement has resigned

## Relative clauses with indefinite words

As we saw in the case of negative sentences (Unit 16), the question words can have an 'indefinite' meaning. A distinct type of relative clause uses the same question words to mean 'whoever', 'whatever' and so on:

**Bīngō mē ngāam jauh yiu dōuh-hip**  
 Whoever is in the wrong should apologize

**Mātyéh gáamga jauh máaih mātyéh**  
 Whatever is on sale, we'll buy it

Note the repetition of the question word and the use of **jauh** as in conditional sentences (Unit 19). Similarly with other question words:

**Bìn gān gūngsī chéng ngóh, ngóh jauh heni bìn gān jauh lō**  
 I'll go to work for whichever company employs me

**Léih séung dím jauh dím lā**  
 Do as you like

**Bìndonh yáuh hóit-tān, ngóhdeih jauh heni gódooh wáan**  
 We'll go on holiday wherever there's a beach

### Exercise 18.1

Based on the sentence provided, construct a classifier relative clause to modify the italicized head noun.

Example: **Gó dĩ yàhn páau-gán bonh** Those people are jogging  
 → **Páau-gán bonh gó dĩ yàhn** The people who are jogging

- 1 **Gó go *deihcháan* gínggái tauhsín dá-dihwá làih**  
 That estate agent has just called
- 2 **Go *wuihgaisí* chih-jó-jik**  
 The accountant has resigned
- 3 **Gó dĩ *geijé* yíng-gán-séung**  
 Those reporters are taking pictures
- 4 **Jek *gáu* sātjūng-jó sām yaht**  
 The dog went missing for three days
- 5 **Dí *hohksāang* jauh-gán sahtyihm**  
 The students are doing experiments
- 6 **Go *behngyàhn* chéut-jó yún**  
 The patient has got out of the hospital
- 7 **Dí *jyūn-gá* yáitchàih yihh-gan lí go mahntàih**  
 The specialists are studying this problem together
- 8 **Go *páhngyáuh* taam-gwo ngóh géi chí**  
 The friend has visited me a few times
- 9 **Ga *chē* johng chān jek mǎan**  
 The car has bumped into a cat
- 10 **Go *yīsāng* bōng kéunh hoi-dōu**  
 The surgeon has performed the operation for him

### Exercise 18.2

Translate these sentences into Cantonese.

- 1 The company that had lost (**síht-jó**) a lot of money had gone bankrupt (**jāp-jó-lāp**)
- 2 The man I bumped into (**johng dóu**) yesterday was my boss
- 3 The watch (**jek hūn**) that he wears (**daai-jyuh**) all the time is beautiful
- 4 The professors that we visited (**taam-gwo**) once are Americans
- 5 The computer that I'm using is too old (**gaah**)
- 6 Those few letters that I've written have disappeared (**ngin-jó**)
- 7 Those Cantonese books that we've bought are expensive (**gwai**)
- 8 The films that you like to see are too slow (**maahn**)
- 9 The wine that they've drunk smells nice (**hóu hēung**)
- 10 The medicine that she takes is effective (**hóu yáuh-haauh**)

### Exercise 18.3

Construct a colloquial relative clause using **gó** to replace those given using **ge**:

Example: **Ngóh jā ge chē móuh láahnghei**

The car I drive has no air conditioning

→ **Ngóh jā gó ga chē móuh láahnghei**

- 1 **Ngóh tái-hóh ge yīsāng haih Gínkuih bátyihp ge**  
The doctor I've been consulting graduated from Cambridge
- 2 **Kéuih dī jáiléui dnhk ge hohkhaauh sáu hóu gwai hohkfai**  
The school his children go to charges expensive fees
- 3 **Kéuih jyú ge sung mónh lohk yihm**  
The dishes she cooked did not have salt
- 4 **Ngóh chéng ge yàhn-haak chyühnbouh lèih chàih saai**  
The guests I invited have all arrived
- 5 **Chih dou ge hohksāang hóyih choh hái hauhbihn**  
The students who arrived late can sit in the back
- 6 **Syühbou hóu yihpjik ge gūngsai jeungahn kòhng sing**  
The companies which announced good results have risen in value lately
- 7 **Ngāam-ngāam máaih ge gongkahn yàuh Dákgwok wahn dou**  
The piano we have just bought arrived from Germany
- 8 **Go jái waahk ge wá hóyih sung béi yàhn**  
The pictures that my son drew can be given (as gifts) to people
- 9 **Lóuhbāan chéng ge beisyā meih chih dou gwo**  
The secretary the boss employed has never been late
- 10 **Ngóh jūngyí ge sūnsyut dōsou mónh bouhlihk ge**  
The novels I like usually don't have violence

**†Exercise 18.4**

Use a relative clause to combine the sentences provided.

Example: **Léih bōng ngóh máaih gíh sāam; gíh sāam mgin-jó**  
 You bought a dress for me; the dress has disappeared  
 → **Léih bōng ngóh máaih gó gíh sāam mgin-jó**  
 The dress you bought for me has disappeared

- 1 **Kéuih gei go bāau-gwó béi ugóh; go bāau-gwó chúhug dou ling nh**  
**lól**  
 He sent me a parcel; the parcel is so heavy that I can't lift it
- 2 **Léih tēuijā go hohksāang; go hohksāang háau-sih chēut-māu**  
 You recommended the student; the student cheated in the exam
- 3 **Léih gaaisiuh go tùhngsih làih gūngsi joun-yé; go tùhngsih haih ngóh**  
**gauh tùhngghohk**  
 You introduced a colleague to work in our company; the colleague is an old classmate of mine
- 4 **Chàhmyah tái-jó tou hei; tou hei ge jyúgok haih ugóh ge muhng jūng**  
**chihngyàhn**  
 I saw a film yesterday; the star of that film is my dream lover
- 5 **Go-go jaan go sailonh dākyí; go sailonh haih wahahyut-yih**  
 Everyone praises the child as cute; the child is a mixed-race child
- 6 **Ngóhdeih syún-jó go leuhtsi joun yihyàhn; go leuhtsi nh jéun heui**  
**Bākging**  
 We elected a lawyer to be a legislator; the lawyer is not allowed to go to Beijing
- 7 **Ngóh dehng-jó bún sán syā; bún sán syā yuhng làih joun chāamháau**  
 I ordered a new book; the new book is used for reference
- 8 **Kéuih wán dóm di yeuhk; di yeuhk yiu hūng-tóuh sihk ge**  
 He found the medicine; the medicine needs to be taken on an empty stomach
- 9 **Ngóh sung jek gaaijí béi go léuihjái; go léuihjái haih ugóh meih-fān-**  
**chūi**  
 I gave the girl a ring; the girl is my fiancée
- 10 **Ngóh muihmúí tahng go yīsāng paak-tō; go yīsāng làih sihk-faahn**  
 My sister is dating a doctor; the doctor is coming to dinner

# UNIT NINETEEN

## Subordinate clauses

Subordinate clauses as a whole are used less than in English and European languages, because other means such as serial verb constructions are used instead, especially in colloquial speech (see below on 'before'/'after', and Unit 11). It is often possible to combine two clauses without the use of conjunctions or subordinate clauses.

### Double conjunctions

A characteristic feature of Chinese syntax is the use of two conjunctions in concert to express the relationship between a main clause and a subordinate one. Such patterns often appear in Chinese speakers' English (as in 'although I haven't met him, \*but still I like him'). The main pairs of this kind are:

causal	yāuwaih ... sóyih	because ... therefore
temporal	dōng ... gójahnsih	when ... then
conditional	yǎhgwó ... jauh	if ... then
concessive	sēuiyih ... daahuhaih	although ... but
	mòuhleuh ... dōu	however ... still

The first conjunction may come either:

a Before the subject of the subordinate clause, much as in English:

**Yāuwaih kéuih behng-jó sóyih yiu wán yàhn doih kéuih séuhng-tòhng**

Because he got ill, (so) he has to look for somebody to do substitute teaching



**Sēuiyih Luk Sújé móuh gūgyihm, daahuhaih bíuyih chēutsik**  
 Although Ms Luk had no experience, her performance was  
 outstanding

b After the subject of the clause (or the topic of the sentence):

**Kéuih yāuwaih behng-jó sóyih yiu wán yáuh doih kéuih séuhug-tòhng**

(lit. he because got ill, so has to look for someone to do substitute teaching)

Because he got ill, (so) he has to look for somebody to do substitute teaching

**Luk Sújé sēuiyih móuh gūgyihm daahuhaih bíuyih chēutsik**

Although Ms Luk had no experience, her performance was outstanding

An exceptional pair is **chēuihjó ... jī-ngoih**, coming at either end of the subordinate clause:

**Chēuihjó cheung-gō jī-ngoih, Wòhng Fēi juhug líhug dough chiuh-làuh**  
 Apart from singing, Faye Wong is also a trendsetter

An alternative word order is to have the subject of the main clause appearing before **chēuihjó**:

**Wòhng Fēi chēuihjó cheung-gō jī-ngoih, juhug líhug dough chiuh-làuh**  
 (lit. Faye Wong apart singing, also trend setting)

Apart from singing, Faye Wong is also a trendsetter

**Ngóh chēuihjó léih jī-ngoih, m̀h wúih oi-séuhug kèihtā yáuh**  
 Apart from you, I won't fall in love with any other person

## Reasons

a **yāuwaih ... sóyih** is the usual pair of conjunctions for stating cause and effect, reasons and consequences:

**Yāuwaih kéuih gánjēung léih sóyih gam lāu léih**

Because he cares about you, that's why he's so angry with you

The point to remember is that the second conjunction **sóyih** must be included, otherwise the sentence will sound strange (as in **Yāuwaih kéuih gánjēung léih, gam lāu léih**).

b **wàahngdihm ... bātyùh**

The conjunction **wàahngdihm** 'since' includes a causal element ('since this happens to be the case anyway ...'). It is typically matched by **bātyùh** in the following main clause:

**Ngòh wàahngdihm yiu jā-chē fāau hení, bātyùh chē màaih léih ā**  
 Since I'm driving back anyway, I might as well give you a lift

**Léih wàahngdihm hái gódouh jouh dāk mhōisām, bātyùh làih ngóh  
 douh jouh lā?**  
 Since you're not happy working there anyway, why not come to  
 work with me?

c **geiyih** is a more formal conjunction meaning 'since' in a causal sense:

**Geiyih léih háau mē dóu yahp daaih-hohk, bātyùh wán yéh jouh lā?**  
 Since you didn't get into university, why not look for a job?

**Geiyih léih mē joi oi ngók, bātyùh fān-sáu lā**  
 Since you don't love me any more, let's split up

Note that neither **wàahngdihm** nor **geiyih** is used for 'since' in the sense of time ('ever since ... happened'), for which see **jihchàuhng** below.

## Time clauses

The main conjunctions used to express time relations come at the end of the clause:

... <b>gójahnsih</b>	when, while
... <b>jichih</b>	before
... <b>jihauh</b>	after

a **gójahnsih** (or **gójahnsí** with changed tone), literally '(at) that time', serves as a conjunction meaning 'when', 'while':

**Kéuih behng gójahnsí sam-jó géi bohng**  
 While she was ill she lost a few pounds of weight

**Ngók git-fān gójahnsih dāk sahphaat seni**  
 I was just eighteen when I got married

This can be shortened to **gójahu** (or **góján** with changed tone):

**Ngóh duhk-syū góján m̃h sīk lám ngóh ge chhntòuh**  
While I was studying I didn't think about my future

In more formal language there is also a pair **dōng ... gójahusih**:

**Dōng ngóh jihkmohk gójahusih, (jah) wúih lám héi léih**  
When I'm lonely, I think of you

Another formal alternative, with or without **dōng**, is ... **ge sīh-hauh** (corresponding to Mandarin **de shíhou**):

**(Dōng) léih hái ngóh sânbīn ge sīh-hauh, ngóh jauh hōisām ge la**  
(from a film)  
When you're at my side I'm happy

b ... **jīhauh** 'after ...'

**Léih fāan dou ūkkéi jīhauh dá go dihnwá bēi ngóh ā**  
Give me a call after you get home

c ... **jīchihū** 'before'

**Ngóh fāan-gūng jīchihū yiu fa hun go jūngtāuh jōng**  
Before I get to work I have to spend half an hour putting on make-up

**Fan-gaan jīchihū yiu góng gújái**  
We have to tell stories before going to sleep

Here it is common to add an expletive **meih** to emphasize that the event has not yet happened:

**Ngóh meih bátyihp jīchihū yīngiūg yáuh yāt fahn gūng**  
Before graduating I already had a job

Notice that the meanings 'before' and 'after' are commonly expressed or implied by a series of verbs (Unit 11), especially in colloquial language. For example, 'after' can be expressed by using **yūhn** 'finish' and **hóu** 'done' after the first verb:

**Léih tái yūhn yīsāng jauh jī haih-mhaih yáuh-jó**  
After seeing the doctor you'll know if you're pregnant

**Dī sung jyú hóu la; sái sáu sīhk-faahn lā**  
The food's ready; wash your hands before eating

d **jihchùhng** ... **jihauh** expresses 'since' in a temporal sense (as opposed to the causal 'since' discussed above)

**Jihchùhng kéuih sātīhng jihauh, sèhng go móuh saai sangei**  
Ever since she lost her job she's been all listless

**Ngóh jihchùhng hūn-jó ūk jihauh, hóu loih móuh fāan làih lí tàuh**  
Ever since I moved, I haven't come back to this area for a long time

## Purpose clauses

Like sequences of actions, purpose is commonly expressed by serial verbs (Unit 11):

**Ngóh yiu wán dĩ yéhsihk wai mǎau**  
I need to find some food to feed the cat

Alternatively, in more formal language, the coverb **waih-jó** 'for the sake of' (Unit 11) can introduce a clause:

**Waih-jó gáam síu hūnghēi wūyihū, ugóhdeih jeuh-leuhng mēh jā-chē**  
In order to reduce air pollution we avoid driving as much as possible

**Waih-jó yihagjip sǎn saigéi, ngóhdeih yuhbeih-jó hóu dō jitmuhk**  
In order to welcome the new century, we have prepared a lot of programmes

## Concessive clauses: although

The concessive meaning 'although' is typically expressed by the pair of conjunctions **sēuiyihū** ... **daahnhaih** 'although ... but':

**Kéuih sēuiyihū haih go hóu yisāng, daahnhaih meih bit bōng dóu léih**  
Although he's a good doctor he won't necessarily be able to help you

The concessive sense can also be conveyed using **juhng** 'still' in the second clause:

**Kéuihdeih gam yáuh-chín juhng jyuh fān gāan gauh ūk**  
Although they're so well off they still live in the old house

The pair **mòuhleuhn ... dōn** 'no matter how ...' is used together with an indirect question:

**Mòuhleuhn bīngō mēh ngāam dōm yim douh-hip**

Whoever was in the wrong it's still necessary to apologize

**Mòuhleuhn géi dō chūn ngóh dōm háng bēi**

However much money I'm still willing to pay

**Ngóhdeih mòuhleuhn géi làahn dōm mēh wáih fonghei**

We won't give up however difficult it is

**Mòuhleuhn yáuh-móuh yáhn fáudeui, jingfú dōm mēh wáih léih ge la**

The government will not care, whether or not anyone objects

Notice once again how the English departs from the Cantonese order in which the circumstance comes first and the result second.

### Exercise 19.1

Add the missing conjunction:

- 1 Sēuiyihk ngóh hōn jyūnjuhug kéuih, \_\_\_\_\_ ngóh mēh tùhugyi kéuih ge tái-faat  
Although I respect him, I don't agree with his views
- 2 Léih jauhsyūn mēh jūngyi, \_\_\_\_\_ yiu jaansìhng ge la  
Even though you don't like it, you've got to approve it
- 3 Lohk-tòhng \_\_\_\_\_, léihdeih yiu gāau gūngfo bēi ngóh  
Before the lesson finishes, you have to turn in the homework to me
- 4 Yàuh yàhn séui \_\_\_\_\_, dī pèihfú saai dou hàhng saai  
After swimming, the skin was all burnt red by the sun
- 5 Yihshap-yát saigéi hòichí \_\_\_\_\_, ngóh yiu sé yàhn fī bán syū  
Before the beginning of the twenty-first century, I have to finish writing this book
- 6 \_\_\_\_\_ géi ngàih-him, kéuih dōm wáih bōng ngóhdeih ge  
However dangerous it is, he'll help us
- 7 Jihchùhng kéuih sīng-jó-jīk \_\_\_\_\_, hōn sū gin ngóhdeih  
Ever since he got promoted, he seldom sees us
- 8 \_\_\_\_\_ géi sām-fú ngóh dōm yiu joun lohk-heui  
However difficult it is, I'll continue to work
- 9 \_\_\_\_\_ léih fan mēh jeuhk ge sìhhaah, jeni hóu teug-báih yamngohk  
When you can't fall asleep, it's best to listen to music

- 10 \_\_\_\_\_ kéuih msúsām, sóyih dít chān jek jó geuk  
Because he's careless, he broke his left foot
- 11 Kéuih gít-fān \_\_\_\_\_, ngóh joun buhléung  
When she got married, I was the bridesmaid
- 12 \_\_\_\_\_ léih góng mātých, ngóh dōu mē seun léih ge la  
No matter what you say, I won't trust you

## Exercise 19.2

Add suitable conjunctions to connect the two clauses provided:

Example: Mòuhleuhn léih géi lāu dōu mē yīnggōi lyún faat-pèihhei  
However angry you are you should not throw tantrums

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_ kéuihdeih paak-tō \_\_\_\_\_, sèhngyaht chēut sēung yahp deui  
Since they've been dating they're always going around together
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_ léih gokdāk jhkmohk \_\_\_\_\_ léih hóyūn dá-díhuwá héi ngóh  
When you feel lonely you can call me
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_ kéuih mē syūfuhk \_\_\_\_\_ yiu chéng ga  
He had to take leave because he was unwell
- 4 Kéuih hál yīyún \_\_\_\_\_ sau dāk hóu gányiu  
While she was in hospital she lost a lot of weight
- 5 Kéuih gāan ūk \_\_\_\_\_ yáuh wihng-chūh \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ yáuh go daaih fāyúu  
Apart from having a swimming pool her house has a big garden
- 6 Ngóhdeih \_\_\_\_\_ bün làih lēdōuh \_\_\_\_\_, jauh yīhgīng hóu jūngyi lēdōuh  
Before we moved here, we already liked this area very much
- 7 Gāan ūk \_\_\_\_\_ hóu daaih \_\_\_\_\_ hóu lyuhn  
Although the house is big, it's messy
- 8 \_\_\_\_\_ léih dím deui ngóh, agóh \_\_\_\_\_ mē wáih gwaai léih  
No matter how you treat me, I won't blame you
- 9 \_\_\_\_\_ kéuih temi-yāu \_\_\_\_\_, sèhngyaht chēut heui léuihhāng  
Since he retired, he has been taking holidays all the time
- 10 Kéuih \_\_\_\_\_ sei jī faatdaht, \_\_\_\_\_ tàuhlóuh gáandāan  
Although he's well-built, his mind is overly simple

## Exercise 19.3

Match the first and second clauses.

- 1 Ngóhdeih seuiyih hóu kùhng                      a sóyih sīn gam hahu léih

2 Ngóh yāuwàih gam oi léih

3 Kéuih chènihjó háu-chòih hóu  
jī-ngoih

4 Ngóh gin dóu lí jēung séung gójáu

5 Léih mǝuhleuhá héi géi dô chíu

6 Ngóhdeih wàahgdiuh jón dom

7 Kéuih geiyihm heung léih domhip

8 Waih-jó daaihgā ge òmchynhn

b janh wúih lám héi léih

c bātyùh jāuwàih hàahug-háh

d ugóhdeih jeuhu faai lèih-hoi

e juhug hóu lengjái

f ngóh dóu àh maaih

g daahnhaiah hóu hōisām

h léih janh yīnggōi yùhnleuhug  
kéuih

# UNIT TWENTY

## Conditional sentences

The key words in Cantonese conditional sentences are **yùhgwó** 'if' and **jauh** 'then'. A fully explicit conditional sentence uses both these conjunctions together – just like the clauses we have seen using pairs such as **yānwaih ... sóyih** 'because ... therefore' (Unit 19):

**Yùhgwó tìngyaht lohk yúh, yāmgohk-wái jauh yiu chéuisiú**

If it rains tomorrow, (then) the concert will have to be cancelled

However, in colloquial speech, either **yùhgwó** or **jauh** is often left out:

**Tìngyaht lohk yúh yāmgohk-wái jauh yiu chéuisiú**

(If) it rains tomorrow then the concert will have to be cancelled

**Léih chih dou ngóhdeih (jauh) m̀h dāng léih ge la**

(If) you're late we won't wait for you

**Yùhgwó yáuh dāk gáan, ngóh m̀h wáih yiu nī go lóuhdauh** (from a film)

If it were up to me, I wouldn't want this father

**Ngóh yùhgwó m̀h léih kéuih, m̀nóh yàhn léih kéuih ge la**

If I don't care about him nobody will

Conditional statements can even be made without either conjunction, especially when one or both clauses is in the negative:

**Léih m̀h túhng ngóh heui, ngóh m̀h fong-sām**

(If) you don't go with me, I won't be at ease

**Léih tóuh-ngoh, sihk-faahn sīn lā**

(lit. you hungry eat rice first)

(If) you're hungry, have your dinner first



**Léih m̀h tēng ngóh góng, léih séi ngahng la** (triad film)  
(*lit* you don't listen I speak, you die surely)  
Disobey me and you've had it

A conditional sentence can be made more explicit by the addition of **ge wah/ge wá** at the end of the 'if' clause (corresponding to **de hǎi** in Mandarin)

**Yùhgwó háau m̀h dón daaih-hohk ge wah, janh yiu heui wáu gūng**  
If I don't get into university I'll go and look for a job

**Léih dǎkhàahn ge wá, hóyih heui hàahng-háh**  
If you have some free time you can go and have a walk

### Syntax of conditional sentences

Some general rules of syntax apply to all the conditional constructions described in this unit:

- i The 'if' clause should normally be placed before the 'then' clause:

**Yùhgwó tinhei hón, ngóhdeih heui Sāandéng tái fūnggíng lo**  
If the weather's fine, we'll go to the Peak to see the view

The main exception is when the 'if' clause is added as an afterthought (see Unit 24):

**Ngóhdeih heui Sāandéng tái fūnggíng lo, yùhgwó tinhei hón (ge wá)**  
We'll go to the Peak to see the view, if the weather's fine, that is

- ii The first conjunction may come either before or after the subject of the 'if' clause:

**Yùhgwó léih m̀h sīk jəuh, dǎng ngóh gaau léih á**  
If you don't know how to do it, let me show you

or **Léih yùhgwó m̀h sīk jəuh, dǎng ngóh gaau léih á**  
If you don't know how to do it, let me show you

- iii The second conjunction comes after the subject of the clause:

**Yīgā bēi go gēiwuīh léih, léih janh yiu chùhngsān jəuh yàhn**  
(*lit* now give you another chance, you therefore need to be a new person)

Now given another chance, you should turn over a new leaf  
(not \*jauh léih yin chühugsau jouh yahn)

## Conditional meanings

The basic structures introduced above can express a range of conditional meanings, including hypothetical and even counterfactual situations:

**Yùhgwó ngóh haih léih, ugóh yátdihng m̀h wúih dǎng kéuih**

If I were you, I would definitely not wait for him

**Yùhgwó móuh léih ge jichih, ngóh dím wúih yáuh gǎmyaht ge  
sihgjauh a?**

(lit. if without your support, how would I have today's achievement)

If it had not been for your support, how would I have been where I  
am today?

**Yùhgwó mbaih go yīsāng hōi-dōu, léih yāt jóu jauh wáau yùhu la**

(from a film)

Had the surgeon not operated, it would have been over for you

## Alternative conditional markers

**gáyùh** and **gáchit** 'supposing' contain the word **gá** 'false' and are used for hypothetical reasoning:

**Gáyùh kénih góng ge yéh haih jām ge, léih jauh baih la**

If what he said is true, you're in trouble

**Gáchit chin lǐhn chùhug mahntàih m̀h làhuggau kahpsih gáaikyut,  
hauhgwó jauh bāt hām chit séung la**

If the millenium bug (Y2K) problem cannot be fixed in time, the  
effect will be unimaginable

**Yeuhkgwó** 'if' is a formal conjunction:

**Yeuhkgwó léih m̀h jipsauh lǐ go ginyih, hóyih sèuhngsi kèihita baahn-  
faat**

If you don't accept this proposal, you can try other solutions

There are also particular conjunctions for special types of condition.

### Necessary conditions: *sín(jí)*

The adverb *sín* expresses conditions meaning 'only . . . if', that is, necessary conditions, or in mathematical terms, 'iff'. It comes after the subject in the main clause:

**Léih gau chiú ngóh sín yáuh hiugcheui**

I'm only interested if you have enough money

There are variant forms *sín*, *sínjī* and *jī* which are to a large extent interchangeable:

**Yùhgwó tinhei hóu sínjī hóyih heui sū yéhsihk**

We can only go for a barbecue if the weather is fine

**Yuhng ngóhdeih ge wuhhán jī syun haih jīugmihug ge syúnjaahk**  
(from television advertisement)

It only counts as the best choice if you use our accounts

Notice how the same structure can also mean 'only . . . when':

**Ngóhdeih gaau-yùhn-syū sín heui dāk**

We can only go when we've finished teaching

In all these constructions the consequent clause, which often comes first in English, comes last in Cantonese. As in the case of serial verbs (Unit 11), it can be observed that the Cantonese syntax reflects the logical order of cause/condition and effect/consequence.

### Sufficient conditions: *jíyiu*

Contrasting with necessary conditions are sufficient conditions, expressed by *jíyiu* 'as long as':

**Jíyiu léih yáuh sáu yáuh geuk, msái gēng ngoh séi ge** (common saying)

As long as you have hands and feet (to work with) you don't need to worry about starving

**Jíyiu kéuih háng góng geui deui-mjyuh, ngóh janh wáih yùhuleuhng kéuih**

As long as he's willing to say sorry I'll forgive him

Note the use of *jauh* in the main clause, as with *yùhgwó*.

## Concessive conditions: jauhsyun

Concessive conditions combine the concessive meaning 'although' and the conditional meaning 'if'. The conjunction **jauhsyun** 'even if' is matched by **dōu** 'still' in the main clause (compare other concessive clauses as illustrated in Unit 19):

**Léih jauhsyun móuh sìhgaau dōu hóyih tái-háh**  
You can have a look even if you don't have time

**Jauhsyun léih díng mòhng dōu yīnggēi pūih-háh ūkkéi yàhu**  
However busy you are, you should still spend time with your family

**Léih jauhsyun mēh waih jīhgēi jeuhkséung, dōu waih-háh dī jáléui jeuhkséung ā**  
Even if you don't show consideration for yourself, show it to your children

Note again how the 'if' clause comes first, while in English it often comes last.

## Negative conditions: chēuihfēi . . .

**Chēuihfēi** 'unless' can be used on its own as a conjunction:

**Chēuihfēi ugóh hóu kùhng, ugóh mēh wáih heui gódouh síhk ge**  
I wouldn't go there to eat unless I was really hard up

**Chēuihfēi léih ga bēi ugóh, ngóh mēh héi-sāu ga** (from a romantic comedy)  
I won't get up (off my knees) unless you marry me

To make the meaning more explicit, **chēuihfēi** in the subordinate clause is matched in the main clause by **yùhgwó mhaih** 'if not':

**Chēuihfēi ngóh hóu kùhng, yùhgwó mhaih ngóh mēh wáih heui gódouh síhk ge**  
(lit. unless I were very poor, if not I would not go there to eat)  
I wouldn't go there to eat unless I was really hard up

**Chēuihfēi léih góibin jyúyí, yùhgwó mhaih móuh hēimohng ge la**  
Unless you change your mind, there's no hope

**Chèuihfèi yáuh dahkbiht sīh, yùhgwó mhaih ngóhdeih singkèih-yát gin**  
 Unless something special happens, we'll see each other on Monday

**yuht . . . yuht the more . . . the more**

An implicitly conditional construction is formed with **yuht** in each clause

**Yuht chigik kéuih yuht jūngyi**  
 The more thrilling, the more he likes it

**Yuht yeh yuht méihlaih** (title of a song)  
 The darker the night, the more beautiful . . .

**Yuht faailohk yuht dohlohk** (title of a film)  
 The happier . . . the more decadent

**Jáu yuht yám dāk dō, chihug-séuih yuht dái-lohk**  
 (*lit.* wine more drink much, emotion more down)  
 The more wine you drink, the more depressed you feel

A related expression, **yuht làih yuht** 'more and more' can be used with any adjective:

**Yuht làih yuht dō yàhn séuhug-móhug**  
 More and more people get on the Internet

**Sīhkēui ge hūnghei yuht làih yuht chā**  
 The air quality in urban areas is getting worse and worse

## Exercise 20.1

The following sentences can be understood as implicit conditionals. Add the appropriate conjunctions to make the first clause explicitly a condition for the second.

Example: **Gúsīh daaih dīt, ngóh mē gau chūu máaih ūk**  
 (If) the stock market crashes I won't have enough money  
 to buy a house  
 → **Yùhgwó gúsīh daaih dīt, ngóh jaoh mē gau chūu máaih ūk**

- Léih mē hahpgaak, ngóh wáih hōn sātmohtug**  
 (If) you don't pass, I'll be disappointed

- 2 Léih choh háidouh, léih wúih syúfuhk dī  
(If) you sit here, you'll be more comfortable
- 3 Yáuh mǎtyéh sǎn lǎu, geijyuh wán ngóh gòhgo  
(If) there's some/any new information remember to get hold of my brother
- 4 Kéuih haik jām pàlungyáuh, kéuih wúih mōuh tìnhgín bōng léih  
(If) he's a true friend, he'll help you unconditionally
- 5 Léih juhng mǐh sǎn-sin, ngóh sǎn-sin  
(If) you still won't hang up, I'll hang up
- 6 Léih hau-góng, ngóhdeih séi ngaahng  
(If) you call the police, we've had it
- 7 Ngóh mǐh daai ngáah-géng, yehmáah tái mǐh dón loh páai  
(If) I don't wear glasses I can't see the road signs in the night
- 8 Léih kàhnhk dī, yátdihng hóyih háau dóu hóu hohkhaauh  
(If) you work a bit harder surely you can get into a good school

## Exercise 20.2

Add the appropriate conjunctions to give the two meanings for the following sentences.

Example:

- a Yùhgwé léih mahn kéuih kéuih jauh wúih bōng léih  
She can help you if you ask her
  - b Yùhgwé léih mahn kéuih kéuih sūn wúih bōng léih  
She can only help you if you ask her
- 1a Go jái \_\_\_\_\_ faat-pèihhei, \_\_\_\_\_ mǐh yínggòi laauh kéuih  
Even if your son throws a tantrum you shouldn't scold him
  - b Go jái \_\_\_\_\_ faat-pèihhei, \_\_\_\_\_ mǐh yínggòi laauh kéuih  
Unless your son throws a tantrum you shouldn't scold him
  - 2a \_\_\_\_\_ yáuh yáuh háng gyim chín, ngóhdeih \_\_\_\_\_ yáuh hēimohng  
If people are willing to donate funds we have a chance
  - b \_\_\_\_\_ yáuh yáuh háng gyim chín, ngóhdeih \_\_\_\_\_ yáuh hēimohng  
Only if people are willing to donate funds do we have a chance
  - 3a Léih \_\_\_\_\_ mǐh góng-yéh, \_\_\_\_\_ mǐh yáuh wah léih ngá ge  
Even if you keep your mouth shut, nobody will say you are dumb
  - b Léih \_\_\_\_\_ mǐh góng-yéh, \_\_\_\_\_ mǐh yáuh wah léih ngá ge  
Unless you keep your mouth shut, nobody will say you are dumb
  - 4a \_\_\_\_\_ dī làuhga bóchih pìngwán, sǎn lǎu \_\_\_\_\_ mǎaih dāk gwo laak  
As long as house prices keep stable it's safe to buy new houses
  - b \_\_\_\_\_ dī làuhga bóchih pìngwán, sǎn lǎu \_\_\_\_\_ mǎaih dāk gwo gé  
If house prices keep stable it'll be safe to buy new flats

- 5a Léih \_\_\_\_\_ heung ngóh donhhip, \_\_\_\_\_ ngóh yíhhaun m̀h ch́oi léih  
Unless you apologize to me, I won't have anything more to do with you
- b Léih \_\_\_\_\_ heung ngóh donhhip, ngóh yíhhaun \_\_\_\_\_ m̀h ch́oi léih  
Even if you apologize to me, I won't have anything more to do with you
- 6a Léih \_\_\_\_\_ yāusik gau \_\_\_\_\_ wúh h́on fāan  
As long as you take more rest you'll get better
- b Léih \_\_\_\_\_ yāusik gau \_\_\_\_\_ wúh h́on fāan  
You'll only get better if you take more rest
- 7a \_\_\_\_\_ yáuh sàhujik, \_\_\_\_\_ móuh dāk gau ge la  
Unless there's a miracle, there's no way out
- b \_\_\_\_\_ yáuh sàhujik, \_\_\_\_\_ móuh dāk gau ge la  
Even if there's a miracle, there's still no way out
- 8a \_\_\_\_\_ léih tàuh ngóh yāt pin, ngóh \_\_\_\_\_ hóyih waih léih fuhkmouh  
I can only serve you if you vote for me
- b \_\_\_\_\_ léih tàuh ngóh yāt pin, ngóh \_\_\_\_\_ hóyih waih léih fuhkmouh  
I can serve you as long as you vote for me

### Exercise 20.3

Express the following pairs using **yuht làih yuht** and **yuht ... yuht**:

Example: a You're getting more and more forgetful

b The older you get the more forgetful you become

a Léih yuht làih yuht móuh-geising

b Léih yuht lóuh yuht móuh-geising

1a I get more and more scared (gēng)

b The more I think about it (lám), the more scared I get

2a I miss him (gwa-jyuh kénih) more and more

b The more I miss him, the more I want to see him

3a Her daughter gets better and better looking (leang)

b Her daughter gets better looking the older (daaih) she gets

4a I like this song (jūngyi 𠵿 sán gō) more and more

b The more I listen to (tēng) this song, the more I like it

5a The matter (gihh sīh) becomes harder and harder (lāahn) to solve (gáaikyut)

b The longer the matter drags on (tō), the harder it is to solve

# UNIT TWENTY-ONE

## Reported speech

Reported (or indirect) speech is used to relate what another person has said. It is expressed quite straightforwardly, without particular distinctions of tense or mood, but attention should be paid to the use of sentence particles.

### Verbs of saying

In reporting speech, **wah** 'say' is followed directly by the reported statement: there is no counterpart to 'that'.

**Ngóh a-gô wah Sîng Hòhug jwei dái**

My brother says Singapore Airlines is the best value

Note how the subject of the reported statement can be omitted if the person referred to is already present as the subject of the verb of saying, like 'May' in the following:

**A-May wah (kéuih) móuh hingcheni**

May said she wasn't interested

**wah** is also used following other verbs of saying such as **góng** 'speak' and **tàuhson** 'complain':

**Kéuih tùhng ngóh góng wah taai guih** (not \***Kéuih tùhng ngóh góng taai guih**)

He told me that he was too tired

**Kéuih tùhng ngóh tàuhson wah di tùhngsih móuh láihmaauh**

He complained to me (saying) that his colleagues were not polite



## Particles: **wo** and **wóh**

These two sentence particles (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 25) play an important role in reported speech. Adding the particle **wo** flags the item as 'news'

**Boují wah gó tou hei hóu tái wo**  
The paper says that film is good

Adding the variant **wóh** shows that what is reported is second hand information:

**A-Sin wah gó tou hei hóu tái wóh**  
Sin says that film is good

These particles can also be used without indirect speech. Use of **wo** then marks the content of the sentence as news, while **wóh** implies indirect speech:

<b>Kéuih sāang-jó go léui wo!</b>	She's had a daughter! (surprisingly)
<b>Kéuih sāang-jó go léui wóh</b>	She's had a daughter (reportedly)
<b>Jáu dāk la wo</b>	We can leave now (you know)
<b>Jáu dāk la wóh</b>	We can leave (according to what someone has said)

There are also explicit phrases to introduce hearsay information, such as **tēng-góng (wah)** which are typically used together with **wo** or **wóh**:

**Tēng-góng (wah) léih sīng-jó jāk wo!**  
I hear you've been promoted!

**Tēng-góng (wah) kéuih git-jó-fān wóh**  
I hear she's got married

## Verbs of thinking

Verbs of thinking, belief, etc., work like verbs of speaking, with the content of a person's thoughts being reported like that of speech.

<b>lám</b>	think
<b>sēungseun</b>	believe
<b>yíhwàih</b>	think, believe (mistakenly/falsely or dubiously)

**Ngóh lám jeni hóu wán go sīfú**  
I think it's best to contact a professional

**Ngóh sēungseun ngóhdeih jòuh dāk dóu**  
I believe we can manage it

**Léih yíhwàih hóyih ngāak kéuih mē?**  
Did you really think you could cheat him?

Note the distinction between **lám** and **sēungseun** on the one hand, and **yíhwàih** which suggests that the belief is false.

## Indirect questions

Reported questions are based straightforwardly on direct questions (see *Basic Cantonese*, Units 23–24), introduced by the verb **mahn** ‘ask’:

<i>Direct question</i>	<i>Indirect question</i>
<b>Léih heui-mh-heui ngoih-gwok a?</b> Are you going abroad?	<b>Sailóu mahn léih heui-mh-heui ngoihgwok</b> Brother asked if you were going abroad
<b>Léih yáuh-móuh hiugcheui a?</b> Are you interested?	<b>Ngóh mahu léih yáuh-móuh hingcheui jē</b> I’m just asking if you’re interested
<b>Ngóhdeih heui bindouh a?</b> Where are we going?	<b>A-mēi mahn ngóhdeih heui biudouh</b> May asked where we were going
<b>Léihdeih jòuh-gáu mātýéh a?</b> What are you doing?	<b>Kéuihdeih mahn ngóhdeih jòuh-gán mātýéh</b> They asked what we were doing

The particle **a** which usually accompanies direct questions can be omitted since the indirect question no longer has the force of a question. Again **wóh** can be added in its place to stress that the question is a quoted one:

**Kéuih mahn léih tūhng bingó heui gāai wóh**  
She asked who you went out with

## Indirect commands

In reporting commands, the verb **gin** ‘tell’ is the main reporting verb. The pattern used is based on that for imperative sentences (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 26):

*Imperative***Léihdeih jóu dī làih lâ**

Come a bit earlier

*Indirect command***Ngóh giu kéuihdeih jóu dī làih**

I told them (to) come earlier

The particles **ā** and **lā** which are characteristic of imperatives are omitted (since the sentence no longer has the force of an imperative), unless the report is itself a command:

**Léih giu kéuihdeih jóu dī làih lâ** Tell them (to) come earlier

Other verbs used are **hyun** 'urge', **mihnglihng** 'order', **gínggou** 'warn', and **gin-yíh** 'suggest':

**Ngóh māmih sèhngyaht hyun ngóh git-fān**

My mother is always urging me to get married

**Yisāng gin-yíh ngóh jowh dô dī wahnduhng**

The doctor suggests that I take more exercise

In the case of a negative command, **mbóu** 'don't' is retained in the reported form:

*Imperative***Léih mhóu gam gāp lâ!**

Don't be in such a hurry

*Indirect command***Yisāng giu ngóh mhóu gam gāp**

The doctor told me not to be in such a hurry

**Mhóu tàuhjī taai dô wo!**

Don't invest too much!

**Kéuih gínggou ngóh mhóu tàuhjī taai dô wóh**

She warned me not to invest too much

**Mhóu gam jóu teuiyāu lâ!**

Don't retire too early!

**Kéuih hyun ngóh mhóu gam jóu teuiyāu**

He urged me not to retire too early

**Mhóu síhk-yīn wo!**

Don't smoke, OK!

**Lóuhbáan mihnglihng ngóh mhóu síhk-yīn**

The boss orders me not to smoke

**Exercise 21.1**

Report the following statements:

Example: **Lóuhbáan** (boss): **tíngyaht yiu hoi-wúi**

We need to have a meeting tomorrow

→ **Lónhbáan wah fúgyaht yiu hōi-wúí (wóh)**

The boss says we need to have a meeting tomorrow

- 1 Muihmúi (sister): ngóh móuh chin la I'm out of money
- 2 Sinsāang (teacher): léihdeih jám dāk It's all right for you to leave  
ga la
- 3 Gúgchaat (police): ngóhdeih We're looking for witnesses  
wán-gán jing-yáhn
- 4 Leuhtsi (solicitor): léih yiu faai dī You have to sign quickly  
chūn-méng
- 5 Yisāng (doctor): léih m̄h yīnggōi Don't eat sweet things  
sihk tūm yéh
- 6 Pòhpó (grandmother): kéuihdeih They can't find their way home  
m̄h sīk louh fāan ūkkéi
- 7 A-Yī (aunt): ngóh máaih-jó I bought some gifts for your  
láihmaht bēi léih dī jái léui children
- 8 Go léui (my daughter): ngóh yiu I have to go to a birthday party  
heui sāangyaht-wúí
- 9 Bōsf (boss): gūngsī gām lín m̄h The company is not raising  
gā yáhn-gūng salaries this year
- 10 Ngóh taai-tái (my wife): gām jūi This morning the reporters were  
yáuh geijé wán léih looking for you

## Exercise 21.2

Use an indirect question to report the direct question provided:

Example: Go sigēi: Léih jyuh hái biūdouh a?

→ Go sigēi mahu ngóh jyuh hái biūdouh wóh

- 1 A-mā: Kéuihdeih géisih bátyihp a? When do they graduate?
- 2 Mihng-jái: Léih jūng-m̄h-jūngyi tái Do you like watching films?  
hei a?
- 3 Dī hohksāang: Léih lóuhgūng haih- Is your husband English?  
m̄h-haih Yinggwok-yáhn a?
- 4 A-Sin: Léih séung-m̄h-séung làuh Do you want to stay in Hong  
hái Hēunggóng a? Kong?
- 5 A-Dāk: Mātyéh haih léihdeih What's the secret of your success?  
sihnggūng ge beikyut a?
- 6 Yisāng: Dīnggái léih gam How come you're so healthy?  
gihuhōng gé?
- 7 Go beisyū: Léih joun māt gam What are you excited about?  
hiugfáhn a?

- |    |   |  |
|----|---|--|
| 8  | <b>Sí gaausauh: Léih gokdák bīngō</b><br><b>jeui yáuh chíhngjāt a?</b>          | Who do you think has the most potential?   |
| 9  | <b>Dī chánchik: Léihdeih dī jáiléui</b><br><b>góng Jīngmán dīhng Yīngmán a?</b> | Do your children speak Chinese or English? |
| 10 | <b>Go túhngsib: Díim sīn hóiyih máaih</b><br><b>dóu lí go yúhn-gín a?</b>       | How can one buy this software?             |

### Exercise 21.3

Report the imperatives as indirect commands using appropriate verbs such as **giu** 'ask', **hyun** 'urge', **mīhnglihng** 'order', and **gin-yih** 'suggest':

Example:

- Lóuhbáan** (your boss): **Léih faai dī fāan làih lá**  
You come back quickly  
→ **Lóuhbáan giu ngóh faai dī fāan làih**  
My boss asked me to come back quickly

- |    |   |  |
|----|---|--|
| 1  | <b>Ngóh pàhngyáuh</b> (friend):<br><b>Mhóu gam sēung-sām lá</b>                               | Don't be so sad                        |
| 2  | <b>Sínsāang</b> (teacher):<br><b>Léihdeih jikháak tūhng bát lá</b>                            | Stop writing straightaway              |
| 3  | <b>Go túhngsīh</b> (colleague):<br><b>Mgōi bōng-sáu ā</b>                                     | Give me a hand, please                 |
| 4  | <b>Gíngchaat</b> (police):<br><b>Léih jikháak fong dái bá chēung</b>                          | Put down the gun immediately           |
| 5  | <b>Jyūn-gā</b> (experts):<br><b>Maahn-máan dáng háh sīn lá</b>                                | Wait patiently                         |
| 6  | <b>Yīsāng</b> (doctor):<br><b>Faai dī gaai yín lá</b>   | Hurry up and give up smoking           |
| 7  | <b>Lóuhpòh</b> (wife):<br><b>Mhóu gam yeh fāan ūkkéi a</b>                                    | Don't come home too late               |
| 8  | <b>Go túhngbohk</b> (classmate):<br><b>Yiu hóu hóu bōnjuhng sātái a</b>                       | Look after your health                 |
| 9  | <b>Go leuhtsī</b> (lawyer):<br><b>Jikháak faat fūng leuhtsī seun</b><br><b>béi go jōuhaak</b> | Serve notice on the tenant immediately |
| 10 | <b>Ngoh lóuhgūng</b> (my husband):<br><b>Puīb ngóh chēut beui sibk-faahn lá</b>               | Come out to dinner with me             |

# UNIT TWENTY-TWO

## Cantonese speech conventions

### Everyday greetings

One of the first items taught to learners of Cantonese is often **léih hóu ma?** Unfortunately this is rarely used, and seems to have developed as an awkward equivalent to the English 'How do you do?' A set of conventional greetings is more widely used:

Hóu loih móuh giu wo  
Sihk-jó faahn meih a?

Long time no see  
How's it going? (*lit.* have you  
eaten yet?)

These are probably used more than the equivalents of Western greetings, such as:

léih hóu      How do you do?  
joi gin      goodbyc

jóu sàhu      good morning  
jóu táu      good nigh!

Especially in Hong Kong Cantonese, the English-derived **hā-lóu** and **bāai-bāai** are widely used – the latter much more often than the formal **joi gin**.

Another set of greetings consists of mundane observations about the situation:

(Māt) gam āam a!  
(Léih) fāan làih làh  
Fāan-gūng àh?  
Hāahug-gūngsi àh?  
Māaih-yéh àh?

What a coincidence! (to bump into you)  
You're back!  
On your way to work?  
Out shopping, are you?  
Doing your shopping, are you?

These greetings, which appear redundant to the English speaker, are the social equivalent of observations about the weather (which seem similarly redundant to Chinese speakers).

## Greetings for special occasions

**Gūnghéi (saai)** 'congratulations' is an all-purpose greeting for happy occasions such as births, weddings, graduations and promotions:

**Gūnghéi léih, sāang-jó go léih! Jūk kénih faai gōn jéung daaih, yuht daaih yuht leng**

Congratulations on having a baby daughter! May she grow up quickly, more and more beautiful

**Gūnghéi saai wo, gam faai janh sing-jūk**

Congratulations on getting your promotion so soon

**Gūnghéi faat chòih** (*lit.* congratulations, make money)

Happy (Chinese) New Year

Other useful phrases for different occasions include:

<b>Sāulihu faailohk</b>	Happy New Year
<b>Singdaan faailohk</b>	Happy Christmas
<b>Sāangyaht faailohk</b>	Happy birthday
<b>Sānfān faailohk</b>	Happy marriage ( <i>lit.</i> newly-wed happiness)

Note the use of **jūk** 'wish' in the following conventional expressions:

<b>Jūk léih léuihtònh yuhfaai</b>	(Wish you) have a pleasant journey
<b>Jūk léih yāt louh seuhn fūng</b>	(Wish you) have a smooth journey (by air or sea)
<b>Jūk léih jóu yaht hōngfuhk</b>	(Wish you) get well soon

## Introductions

While the usual classifier to refer to people is **go**, as in **lí go yàhn** 'this person', the polite classifier **wái** is used to confer respect, as when a person is being introduced:

<b>Lí wái haìh Máh gūngléih</b>	This is the manager, Mr Ma
<b>Chéng gó wái léuihsih séuhng tòih</b>	May I invite that lady onto the stage
<b>Yáuh géi wái tūhngsih tàih-yih góih kèih</b>	A few colleagues have suggested changing the date

**gok wái** everyone

**Gok wái gābāu, fūyihng léihdeih chāamgā gām chi ge yihutóuwái**  
Honoured guests, you are all welcome to participate in this seminar

**wái** is also used by waiters:

<b>Géi dô wái a?</b>	How many are you?
<b>Yám mǎtyéh chàh a, léuhug wái?</b>	What tea would (the two of) you like?
<b>Mgòi líbihn ā, gam dô wái</b>	Please come this way (all of you)

Concerning names (sing, surname) and professions:

<b>A: Léih gwai sing a?</b>	What is your name?
<b>B: Ngóh sing Máh ge</b>	My name is Ma
<b>A: (Léih) jouh sihg hòhug a? (formal)</b>	What is your profession?
<b>Léih jouh bīn hòhug a? or Léih jouh mǎtyéh jikyihp a?</b>	
<b>B: Ngóh jouh bóubim ge</b>	I'm in insurance

## Kinship terms

Kinship terms are widely used within the family as terms of address, in preference to personal names. Use of the appropriate kinship term is a sign of due respect, especially for senior relatives: to call an uncle or grandparent by their first name as in contemporary Western culture is unheard of.

	<i>Elder</i>	<i>Younger</i>
sister	<b>gājē</b>	<b>mùihmúi</b>
brother	<b>gòhgō</b>	<b>sailóu</b>

Modifiers or numbers are added to distinguish multiple brothers and sisters:

<b>dauib gō</b>	big brother
<b>sai múi</b>	little sister
<b>yih gājē</b>	second (eldest) sister

For grandparents, aunts and uncles the kinship terms distinguish between paternal and maternal relatives. There are also different terms for aunts and uncles based on whether they are older or younger than one's father/mother



	<i>Paternal</i>	<i>Maternal</i>
aunt: older	<b>gū-mā</b>	<b>yih-mā</b>
aunt: younger	<b>gū-jē</b>	<b>a-yī</b>
uncle: older	<b>a-baak</b>	<b>kau-fú</b>
uncle: younger	<b>a-sūk</b>	<b>kau-fú</b>
grandmother	<b>a-māh, mǎh-mǎh</b>	<b>a-pòh, pòh-pó</b>
grandfather	<b>a-yèh, yèh-yé</b>	<b>a-gūng, gūng-gūng</b>

Divorcees and exes:

<b>chihh-douh làahmyáuh</b>	ex-boyfriend	<b>chihh-chāi</b>	ex-wife
<b>chihh-douh léuihyáuh</b>	ex-girlfriend	<b>chihh-fū</b>	ex-husband

Many of these terms can also be used in an extended way to address strangers of an appropriate age.

<b>a-baak</b>	sir (for older men)
<b>a-pòh</b>	madam (for older women)
<b>sīnsāang</b>	sir
<b>síujé</b>	miss, madam (for younger women)
<b>túhng-jí</b>	comrade (for gay people)

## Names

The usual format is surname – given name:

<b>Jāu Yeuhn Faat</b>	<b>Chow Yun Fat (actor)</b>
<b>Wòhng Fēi</b>	<b>Faye Wong (pop diva)</b>

The given name usually has two syllables in Hong Kong, often one in mainland China.

A few surnames have two syllables:

<b>Ān Yèhng Suhk Yih</b>	
<b>Sí-tòuh Wǎh</b>	(Szeto Wah, democratic politician)

Maiden names are commonly used, as seen in some of the celebrities and distinguished women in Hong Kong. The husband's surname comes first, followed by the woman's maiden name and first name:

<b>Chàhn Fōng Ōn-Sāng</b>	<b>Mrs Anson Chan (née Fong)</b>	The first Chief Secretary of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
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**Fok Jyū Lihng-Ling**

Ms Loretta Fok (née Chu) a former Miss Hong Kong

They are addressed as **Chàhn Táai** and **Fok Táai**. On the other hand, many married women do not go by their husband's surname, but are addressed as **síujé** or **léuihsih** as in **Fóng síujé** or **Fóng léuihsih** 'Ms Fong'. When single syllables, either given names or surnames are used, one of the following is normally added:

a The prefix **a-**, together with a change of tone (see Unit 3):

<b>Tàahm Wihng Lèuhn</b>	→ <b>A-Léun</b> Alan Tam (singer)
<b>Mùih Yihm Fóng</b>	→ <b>A-Múi</b> Anita Mui (Canto-pop diva)
<b>Làhm Jí Chèuhng</b>	→ <b>A-Lém</b> Alex Lam (singer)

b Colloquially, epithets are added to names:

<b>Lóuh-Léi</b>	Old Mr Lee
<b>Fèih-Páng</b>	fatty Pang (nickname of <b>Pàahng Dihng Hóng</b> , Christopher Patten, the last British governor of Hong Kong)

c The suffix **jái** for males and **léui** for females are attached to given names to show familiarity:

<b>Faat-jái</b>	Chow Yun Faat (actor)
<b>Wàh-jái</b>	Lau Dak Wah (Andy Lau, actor and singer)
<b>Ōn-jái</b>	Hui Chi On (singer)
<b>Màhn-léui</b>	Wu Si Man
<b>Hàh-léui</b>	Lau Lai Ha
<b>Jyū-léui</b>	Pearl

## Occupational terms

It is often appropriate to address people by their occupation:

<b>sīgēi</b>	driver (taxi or bus drivers)
<b>sífú</b>	craftsmen (implies a certain expertise, such as decorators, electricians, tailors)
<b>lóuhbáau, lóuh sai or bōsí</b>	boss
<b>daaíhlóu</b>	(boss) also used as an interjection

Some of the more professional terms are used together with surnames, as in **Māh sǐfú** for a craftsman named Ma, **Chàuh leuh-tsí** for a lawyer named Chan, **Jéung lóuh-sí** for a teacher named Cheung, etc.

## Taboo words

Superstitions live on in China, sometimes branding as taboo certain words which sound too much like an inauspicious term. The most commonly encountered examples are with numbers, notably **sei** (4) which rhymes with **séi** 'to die' (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 28). In addition, a number of words are subject to taboo because they resemble unlucky words:

<i>Taboo word</i>	<i>Substitute auspicious word</i>
<b>hūng láu</b> empty flat (as in <b>hūng</b> an ominous word associated with hazard and havoc)	<b>gāt láu</b>
<b>hūng-sām chái</b> water spinach (same reason as above)	<b>tūng chái</b>
<b>fú-gwā</b> bitter melon ( <b>fú</b> 'bitter', as in <b>sauh-fú</b> 'to suffer')	<b>lèuhug gwā</b>
<b>sí</b> tongue (too close to <b>síht</b> 'to lose money')	<b>leih</b> as in <b>ngàuh leih</b> ox tongue
<b>yám gōn</b> drink up ( <i>lit.</i> empty the glass) <b>gōn</b> 'dry' is unwelcome as 'Money is water' ( <b>Séui wáih chòih</b> )	<b>yám siug</b> cheers

The use of **gāt** to avoid **hūng** can be extended to **gāt chē** (empty vehicle), **gāt gēi** (empty plane) and so on. Estate agents, in particular, are careful:

<b>gāan ũk gāt-jó géi go yuht</b>	The house has been empty for a few months
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## Exercise 22.1

Choose a suitable term to address:

- 1 your boss
- 2 a plumber to whom you wish to be polite
- 3 a taxi driver
- 4 Mrs Wong
- 5 Chow Yun Fat (a famous actor), you are a fan of his
- 6 an old woman selling vegetables

## Exercise 22.2

Provide a suitable greeting for the following occasions.

Example: You have just come home from work **Ngóh fān làih la!**  
(I'm back!)

- 1 You bumped into a friend on the aeroplane
- 2 a friend's wedding
- 3 Your friend has given birth to a new baby
- 4 a friend's birthday
- 5 at Christmas
- 6 A friend is on holiday
- 7 A friend is ill
- 8 when somebody proposes a toast
- 9 Chinese New Year
- 10 A friend is moving to a new country

## Exercise 22.3

Introduce the following people, starting with **lī go/wái (haih)** this is ... :

- 1 a colleague
- 2 your doctor
- 3 your professor
- 4 a classmate
- 5 your wife
- 6 your ex-husband
- 7 your first son
- 8 your ex-girlfriend
- 9 your former student
- 10 your husband

# UNIT TWENTY-THREE

## Particles and interjections

As a tonal language, Cantonese does not make use of intonation to the extent that English and other European languages do. Some of the typical functions of intonation, such as providing assurance or suggesting scepticism, are taken on by sentence particles. They range from purely grammatical ones to highly meaningful ones, and from optional to virtually obligatory (like **a** in some questions).

Using particles appropriately is best learnt from practice and experience. Many are untranslatable, the ideas being expressed in English by intonation patterns and tone of voice rather than words. A coy tone of voice, for example, would be rendered by **jěk**:

**Léih máaih-mh-máaih héi ngóh jěk?**

Will you buy it for me?

Some particles are characteristic of particular sentences:

**a** which goes with neutral questions (*Basic Cantonese*, Units 23–24)

**lǎ/ǎ** which accompany imperatives (*Basic Cantonese*, Unit 25)

**mē** and **ǎh** which form questions (Unit 17)

**wo** and **wóh** which appear in indirect speech (Unit 21)

### Evidence and uncertainty

A group of particles suggests something about the status of the information in the sentence – how widely known or established it is, etc. **lō** gives a suggestion that what is said should be obvious:

**Q: Léih daaih-hohk duhk géi dō líh sūn bátyihp a?**

How long does it take to graduate from university?

A: **Sāam lhn lō**

Three years (of course, everyone knows that)

Q: **Kéuih gám jowh jānhañ mómh léihyànñ ge**

It's unreasonable for him to do this

A: **Jauh hañh lō!**

Yes, of course!

Māmih: **Léih háidonh jowh māt a?** Mum: What are you doing?

Go jái: **Jowh gūngfo lō**

Son: Doing homework, obviously

**lō** is often used together with **maih** 'then' which suggests that what follows is an obvious conclusion:

**Léih jowh dāk mhōisām maih wán daih yih fahn gūng lō**

If you're not happy in your work, then find another job

**Ngóh wàahngdihm dākhañ maih yeuk léih chéut làih kīng-háh-gú lō**

Since I'm free anyway, I ask you to come out and have a chat

**Chèuhng tàuhfaat daai ngáahn-géng gó go maih hañh kéuih chíhchāi lō**

(lit. long hair wear glasses that one then is his ex-wife)

The one with long hair and glasses is his ex-wife

**āma** draws attention to something which should be known, typically in response to a question:

A: **Díngáai gam chíh juhng meih fān làih a?**

How come she's still not back?

B: **Juhng hoi-gán-wúi āma**

Because she's still in the meeting (of course)

Contrast the same response with **gwa**:

B: **Juhng hoi-gán-wúi gwa**

She's still in the meeting, I guess

**gwa** here indicates uncertainty – the sentence contains an element of guess-work:

A: **Léih gú kéuih wúih-mh-wúih làih lē**

Guess whether she'll come or not

B: **Wúih gwa**

I guess she will

Similarly, a common response is **haih gwa** 'I guess so', 'I suppose so' or **mhaih gwa** 'I guess not'.

Other common uses of **āma** include:

- Teaching or reminding people of rules and facts which may or may not be obvious, as when a parent is teaching her child the social expectation that one greets (**gim**) a person by their name:

**Léih yiu gim yàhn āma** You should greet people, you know

To make an excuse, as when a parent tries to explain why the children are so naughty:

**Kéuih juhng sai āma. Dím sīk gam dō yéh a?**  
He's still young. How could he know so much?

- To correct a mistake or faulty information, as when one gets on the wrong bus and the bus driver says:

**Mhaih sahþ hou a, yīnggōi daap yāt heuh āma**  
You should take number 1, not number 10

## Particles and questions

In addition to **a** in neutral questions, a variety of particles can be added to achieve particular rhetorical effects:

**há** and **hó** invite agreement, much like a question 'tag' in English. **há** is typically added to instructions ('OK?'):

**Léih geijyuh daai fūng seun fāan làih a há?**  
Remember to bring the letter back, OK?

**Léih yiu súsām jingú jihgéi a há?**  
You've got to take care of yourself, OK?

**hó** is used to check 'isn't that right?'

**Gāu ūk gau saai daaih a, hó?**  
The big is big enough, huh?

**Gau daaih-hohk géi sánfú ge, hó?**  
Quite a task to teach at the university, isn't it?

## Contractions

The particles beginning with the vowel **a** combine with preceding particles to form contracted syllables:

	+ <i>a</i>	+ <i>āma</i>	+ <i>àh</i>
<b>ge</b>	<b>ga</b>	<b>gama</b>	<b>gàh</b>
<b>je/jê</b>	<b>ja</b>	<b>jāma</b>	<b>jàh</b>
<b>la</b>		<b>lāma</b>	<b>làh</b>

The effect of the contraction combines that of the two individual particles involved. We can see this clearly in the case of the contracted forms with **je** 'only':

- i **Dāk ngh go yàhn làih-jó ja, kèiktā yàhn lē?**  
Only five people have come, what about the others?  
(*lit.* fewer than expected, the news being related in a neutral way)
- ii **Dāk ngh go yàhn làih-jó jāma; msái gēng nh̄ gau yéh sihk**  
Only five people have come; there's no need to worry that there won't be enough to eat
- iii **Dāk ngh go yàhn làih-jó jàh! Bīngō hōng ngóh sihk saai dī yéh a?**  
What, only five people have come! Who'll help me eat all this food?  
(*lit.* fewer than expected, constituting a disappointment)

Version i with **je** and **a** is neutral, while in version ii, **jāma** combines the downplaying sense of **je** and the obvious consequence (suggested by **āma**) that there is nothing to worry about. In version iii, **jàh** combines the downplaying sense of **je** and the disapproval or disappointment suggested by **àh**.

## Variants of **ge**

In addition to the contracted forms **ga**, **gāma** and **gàh** as shown above (on **ga** see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 25), the important assertive particle **ge** also has the variants **gé** and **gá**. **gé** has two senses:

- puzzlement about a situation:

**Dínggái gān fóng gam lynlu gé?** How come the room is so messy?  
**Kéuih dou nh̄ daap ngóh gé** He's not answering me (why not?)



- reservation about a statement:

<b>Gám dōu hóu gé</b>	That would be fine too, I suppose
<b>Kéuih géi yáuh-yihng gé</b>	Well, I suppose he's quite stylish . . .

**gá** suggests a stronger sense of reservation, especially in the sequence **sín dāk gá**:

<b>Léih yinggói jī gá</b>	You ought to know that
<b>Léih jōuh yéh mhóu gam maahn</b>	Can't you try not to work so
<b>sín dāk gá?</b>	slowly?
<b>Q: Bātüh léih heui paakhei lá?</b>	Why don't you make a film?
<b>A: Paak-jó chéut làih yáuh yàhn</b>	Only if there are people to see it
<b>tái sín dāk gá</b>	when it's made

## Combining particles

Combinations of particles, like contracted forms, combine the meanings and functions of the individual particles involved. Common combinations include:

**ge + la** (assertion + relevance):

**Fūng seun yihgāng gei-jó chéut heui ge la**  
The letter's already been sent out

**Ngóhdeih jauh dou ge la**  
We're almost there

**ge + mē** (assertion + query):

**Jānhaih mēh bái dāk ngóh jī ge mē?**  
Am I really not allowed to know?

**Ngóh mēh yáhp dāk làih ge mē?**  
Can't I come in?

**Léih chisín ge mē?**  
Are you crazy?

One characteristic of such combinations is that a particle preceding another can be reduced from a full vowel to an unstressed vowel ([ə] or 'schwa') which we may write simply as **e**:

la + mē → le mē

**Léih yíhwaih gám jauh hóyih ngāak dóu ugóh ge la mē?**

Did you actually think you could cheat me by doing this?

## Interjections and exclamations

Common interjections include the following.

<b>Hóu yéh</b>	Great!	<b>Wa (háai)!</b>	Wow!
<b>Aiya!</b>	Oh no!	<b>óh</b>	ah-ha
<b>séi la/bai la</b>	uh-oh!	<b>Chē!</b>	So what! (belittling)
<b>yí?</b>	hah?		

**Hóu yéh, yáuh syut-gōu síhk!**

Great, we have ice cream (to eat)!

**Aiya, sèhng sǎn sǎp saai!**

Oh no, I'm wet all over!

**wa** expresses surprise or shock:

**Wa (háai)! Léih méaih gam dô láihmaht gé!**

Wow, you bought so many gifts!

**Wa! Léih jóu dou go tàuh gam chí Dahksáu gé!**

Wow! You cut your hair such that you look so much like the Chief of the SAR!

**Wa! Kéuih ga-jó go yíkmaahu fu-hòuh a!**

Wow! She married a billionaire!

**yí?** expresses surprise plus an element of puzzlement:

**Yí, dīngáai douh mǔhn hōi-jó gé? Haih-mhaih yáuh yáuh yahp-gwo làih a?**

Why is the door open? Did anyone get in here before?

**Yí, yùhnlòih dá cho houhmáh**

Huh, I dialled the wrong number

**Yí, māt léih dóu làih-jó àh?**

Hey, you've come too?

**óh** 'ah-ha' is usually lengthened to express realization and an element of surprise

Óh, yùbulòih ò go sìnji haih hūngsáu

Ah-hah, this one is the murderer (finally realizing the real culprit at the end of the story)

Óh, ngóh jūngyū mīhngbaahk dīngáai léih yin chíhjik

Oh, I finally understand why you had to resign

**chē!** is disparaging or expresses contempt:

Chē! Léih hóu lèk mē? Haih yàhn dōu sīk lā

Huh! You think you're so clever? Anybody knows that

**chōi** is typically used by women in response to someone's inauspicious remarks:

A: Kéuih sèhngyahk sīk yīn; hóu yùhngyīh sāang ngàahn ga

He always smokes; he could easily get cancer

B: Chōi, mē hóu lyúu āp yéh lā Don't talk nonsense

or Chōi gwo léih, daaih gāt leih sīh

(a set expression to neutralize the taboo topic, like 'Touch wood' or 'Let's keep our fingers crossed')

### Exercise 23.1

Respond to the question given, using the particle **lō** or **āma** for obviousness and **gwa** where uncertainty is indicated.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 Q: Heui Jīmsājéui daap géi dōhouh bāsí a? | Which bus goes to Tsimshatsui?            |
| A: Ngh houh _____                           | The Number 5                              |
| 2 Q: Kéuih dīngáai gam sēungsām a?          | Why is she so sad?                        |
| A: Sāt-lyún _____                           | Probably because she's fallen out of love |
| 3 Q: Dīngáai kéuih móuh fāan-gūng a?        | Why didn't she go to work?                |
| A: Heui-jó tái yīsāng _____                 | Because she went to see the doctor        |
| 4 Q: Léih tànhaat dīm gáai bin-jó sīk gé?   | How come your hair has changed colour?    |
| A: Yāh-jó _____                             | Because it's been dyed                    |

- 5 Q: **Heui Jimsājéui daap géi dô houh bāsi a?** Which bus goes to Tsimshatsui?  
 A: **Yāt houh \_\_\_\_\_** The Number 1, I suppose
- 6 Q: **Díngáai kéuih móuh faan-gung a?** Why didn't she go to work?  
 A: **Heui-jó tái yīsāng \_\_\_\_\_** I guess she went to see the doctor
- 7 Q: **Díngáai gam chih ga?** Why are you so late?  
 A: **Seuihdouh sāk-chē \_\_\_\_\_** The tunnel was jammed, you know
- 8 Q: **Géi dô houh gāau jōu a?** On which day do we pay the rent?  
 A: **Yāt houh \_\_\_\_\_** The first

### Exercise 23.2

Add the particles **há** or **hó** as appropriate:

- 1 **Léihdeih yiu tēng pòhpó wah, nh̄ hōu láu-gái a \_\_\_\_\_**  
 You have to obey grandma. Stop playing up
- 2 **Léih màaih-jó dāan ge le \_\_\_\_\_**  
 You have paid the bill, right?
- 3 **Léih jnhng meih jáu jyuh a \_\_\_\_\_**  
 You're not leaving yet, right?
- 4 **Haih ngāam léih sīn hōu góng a \_\_\_\_\_**  
 Say it only if it's right, OK
- 5 **Léih dá-jó dihnwá heui ūkkéi la \_\_\_\_\_**  
 You called home, right?
- 6 **Léih mbóu jāuwàih heui, hái ūkkéi yāusik dô dĩ lā \_\_\_\_\_**  
 Don't go anywhere, just have plenty of rest at home, OK?
- 7 **Dĩ chéung sān saal, douh mūhn só hōu la \_\_\_\_\_**  
 The windows are all closed and the door locked, right?
- 8 **Tingyaht gin lā \_\_\_\_\_**  
 See you tomorrow, OK?

### Exercise 23.3

Add an appropriate interjection from the following:

**wa(hái), baih/séi la, chē, chōi, óh, yí**

Example: **Baih/Séi la, mgin-jó tiuh sósih** Oh dear. I've lost my key

- 1 **\_\_\_\_\_, kéuih hóu leng mē?**  
 She's pretty? (contempt)

- 2 \_\_\_\_\_, **jauh gau jūng la, juhng meih jouh saai** (damned)  
Time's almost up and I still haven't finished
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_, **māt kéuih gihm sām tùhng ngóh yāt yenhung gé!** (surprised and puzzled)  
How come her dress is the same as mine!
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_, **léih tou fānsā hóm leng a!** (surprised and impressed)  
Your wedding gown is beautiful
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_, **gám ge yéh dōu góng dāk chēut gé! Faaí dī lēu háu-séui góng gwo a!**  
(*lit.* such things can speak out! Quickly rinse saliva say again!)  
How could you speak of such things! Rinse out your mouth and say it again
- 6 \_\_\_\_\_, **kéuihdeih haih hīngmúi lèihge, mē haih léuhng gūngpó**  
I see, they are really brother and sister, not a couple

# UNIT TWENTY-FOUR

## Colloquial syntax

Colloquial spoken Cantonese contains numerous features which would not be found in writing, and which rarely appear in textbooks either. Some of these patterns do not sit well with conventional ideas about Chinese grammar, with its fixed subject–verb–object word order. These deviations deserve mention because they are so commonly heard, at least in informal situations.

### The pronoun *kéuih*

In higher registers the third person pronoun *kéuih* is used only to refer to people. In colloquial speech its use is frequently extended:

- referring to things rather than people, especially in imperatives:

**Léih sihk màaih *kéuih* lā!**                      Eat it up!

- referring to the object of *jéung* (see Unit 10):

**Ngóhdeih bātyùh *jéung* dī gauh sām dām-jó *kéuih***

Let's get rid of these old clothes

(Note that *kéuih* here can even refer to a plural noun phrase.)

- referring to nothing at all:

**Yám sing *kéuih***

Wah jī *kéuih*

Ngóh wah jī *kéuih* gáu-chat

Bottoms up, cheers!

Couldn't care less

I couldn't care less about '97 (title of  
a 1990s song)

- reinforcing a noun phrase:

A-Lihng kéuih m̃h lōu la	Ling is leaving (her job)
Ngòh tùhng a-Sām kéuih haih tō-yáu	Sam and I are dating

## Afterthoughts and dislocations

Speakers have afterthoughts: adding some detail, modification or condition after completing a sentence. Some of these patterns have become so common that they no longer feel like afterthoughts, but merely serve as alternative formulations for the same given content, much as in English: 'Pretty confident, she is'. This pattern is termed 'right dislocation' because the right-hand part, after the comma, appears to be out of place. Some of the elements most frequently 'dislocated' include:

- Subject pronouns and noun phrases:

Séi-jó fó la, ga chē	The car's stalled
Gān chí daaih wohk la, léih	(You're) in trouble this time, you are

- Modal auxiliaries (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 20). These verbs have a particular tendency to appear as afterthoughts, serving to modify the preceding sentence.

Léihdeih sái sáu a, yiu	You need to wash your hands
Hóu faai fān làih, yinggōi	(He) should be back soon
Yāt jahn gāan tóuh ngoi ga, léih wúih	In a while you'll be hungry (mother to son)

Note how both the subject and the auxiliary are dislocated together here.

- Adverbs: placed at the end of the sentence, they serve to evaluate the whole proposition:

Hóu hāt-yàhn-jāng, jānhaih	Really disgusting, it is
Géi yáuh-yis̃, dōu	It was quite interesting, actually
Ngóhdeih mhóu heui, bātyàh	Let's not go
Yáuh-móuh m̃h m̃hng a, juhng?	Is there anything you don't understand, anything else?

- Resultative constructions with **dou** (Unit 14):

**Gáu dou uóh hón máugjáng**      It made me frustrated  
 → a **hón máugjáng, gáu dou uóh**  
 or b **uóh hón máugjáng, gáu dou**

- Subordinate clauses and conditionals: although 'if' and 'because' clauses normally come first in the sentence (see Units 19, 20), it is also possible to add them after the main clause as afterthoughts:

**Léih muh jauh tái-háh bouhjí lă**  
 If you're bored, read the newspaper for a while

**Léih tái-háh bouhjí lă, muh jauh**  
 Read the newspaper for a while, if you're bored, that is

## Classifiers

In some slang usages a classifier other than the usual **go** is used for people:

<b>gó tuih yáu</b>	that guy (colloquial)
<b>léih tuih jái/léni</b>	your boyfriend/girlfriend (vulgar)
<b>wuhn gwo giha</b>	change one's boyfriend/girlfriend
<b>giu (jek) gāi/aap</b>	call a prostitute ( <i>lit.</i> chicken)/gigolo ( <i>lit.</i> duck)

The effect is to treat human beings as physical entities, with a demeaning effect:

**Léih tuih jái góng yéh sèhng jek aap gám ga** (from a film)  
 The way your boyfriend talks is just like some gigolo

This usage is sometimes 'corrected' as in the following example:

**Léuihjái haih yāt go-go ge, mhaih yāt tuih-tuih ge** (from a comic film)  
 Girls are supposed to be referred to by **go** not by **tuih**

The humour of this line lies in the contrast between the neutral register **go** and the low register, vulgar use of **tuih** for women. Similarly, nouns formed with **gwái** may take the classifier **jek** as used for animals:

**Ngóh ūkkéi yáuh léuhng jek wā-gwái**  
 There are two noisy devils in my house

A number of measures are used colloquially for time, money, etc.:

**yāt pùhu séui**                      ten thou'(sand dollars)



yāt gauh séui	one hundred dollars
daaih-lāp-lón	a 'big shot' (important person)
yāt lāp jūng	an hour (normally yāt go jūngtāuh)

Léih jī-mò-jī ngóh dáng-jó léih sèng lāp jūng a?

Do you realise I've been waiting for you for a whole flipping hour?

Gāmyaht dī daaih-lāp-lón làih saai

Today all the big shots were here

There are also some colloquial verbal classifiers:

dá kéuih géi yéh	hit him a few times (normally dá kéuih géi háh)
dá (yāt) pōn gihng ge	have a good game (dá-gēi, to play video games)

## The magic of gwái

One of the most versatile elements in colloquial spoken Cantonese, **gwái**, gives a native flavour and colour to ordinary daily expressions in the language. From the Cantonese learner's point of view, to master the different properties of **gwái** may be difficult without sufficient exposure to authentic input as spoken by ordinary people on the street. Examples are typically absent from textbooks which follow the prescriptive tradition in providing formal, prestigious examples for learners. The literal meaning of **gwái** is 'ghost', 'devil' but it has taken on other meanings which are extensions of the original ones, such as mischievousness, frivolousness and strangeness, etc. Chinese people generally have a rich **gwái** culture, and Cantonese is no exception: the ghost festival (**gwái-jit**) falls on the fourteenth day of the seventh month of the Chinese calendar, which is the Chinese equivalent of Halloween in the West. **Gwái** commonly appears:

- As the final element of a compound:

lāahn-gwái	a lazy person	móuhdāam-gwái	a coward
sēui-gwái	rascal (may be affectionate, referring to someone intimate)		

- As the initial element of a nominal compound:

gwáilón	adult male foreigner	gwáipòh	adult female foreigner
gwáijái	child or teenage male foreigner	gwáimúi	child or teenage female foreigner

In these expressions, **gwái** refers to foreigners who have Western features. A common practice is to refer to Westerners as **gwái** as opposed to **yàhn** 'humans'.

**Kéuih haih yàhn diuhghaih gwái a?**  
(*lu*: he's a human being or a ghost?)  
Is he Chinese or Western?

**Ngóh dī jái léui go yéung bun yàhn bun gwái**  
My children look half Chinese and half Western

**Hón chái ngóh lóuhbáan gwái-gwái-déi ge** (from an accountant)  
Fortunately my boss is pretty Westernized

These terms have lost the 'devilish' connotations and are hardly insulting, though in polite company including foreigners they are avoided, **sái-yàhn** (Westerner) and **ngoingwok-yàhn** (foreigner) being used instead.

- With adjective phrases: for emphasis and intensification **gwái** can occur after degree modifiers such as **hón** 'very', **gam** 'so' as an intensifier to modify an adjective:

**Gám jiu gam gwái dngg gé!**                      It's so cold this morning!  
**Dínggái léih gam gwái yimjūm ga?**      Why are you so choosy?

**gwái** can be inserted in the middle of a bisyllabic adjective:

<b>màhfàahn</b>	troublesome	→	<b>màh-gwái-fàahn</b>	really troublesome
<b>sih-daahn</b>	indifferent	→	<b>sih-gwái-daahn</b>	It doesn't matter a bit
<b>dō-yñh</b>	superfluous	→	<b>dō-gwái-yñh</b>	totally unnecessary

- gwái** may come between the verb and aspect marker:

<b>Ga gēi waaih-gwái-jó</b>	The machine has gone and broken down
<b>Gāngsī kám-gwái-jyñh dī chánmàhn</b>	The company is covering up the scandals

These usages express frustration or annoyance. Although mildly expletive, **gwái** is not particularly offensive to native speakers.

- In questions, where **gwái** can also occur between **bīn** and **go** as in **bīn-gwái-go** 'who on earth' or between **bīn** and classifier:

**Bīn gwái ga che jong fāngóh gó ga a?** Which damned car scratched mine?

Bîn gwái jek sîn wáih siug a?  
 mǎtyéh what → mǎt-gwái-yéh  
 jough mǎtyéh what for → jough  
 mǎt-gwái-yéh?  
 Léih gáau mǎt-gwái-yéh a?  
 Kéuih jough mǎt-gwái-yéh gam  
 hōisām a?

Which damned (share) will rise?  
 What on earth, what the hell  
 What on earth for?  
 What on earth are you doing?  
 What on earth is he so happy  
 about?

As the examples show, the effect is to challenge the point made or words used.

- In rhetorical questions (see Unit 17):

Gwái jī mē?  
 Gwái bōng kéuih a

How on earth should I know?  
 Only the devil will help him, i.e.  
 nobody will

### Exercise 24.1

Express the italicized part of the sentence as an 'afterthought'.

Example: *Ngóh wah* móuh hēimohug la  
 → Móuh hēimohug la, ngóh wah

- Gāan ùk* maaih-jó meih a?  
Have you sold the house yet?
- Bátyùh léihdeih yáthàih* heui lā?  
Why don't you go together?
- Ngóh chih òu yānwaih Sijísān Seuihdouh* sāk-chē a  
I'm late because the Lion Rock Tunnel was congested
- Ngóh jánhaih* bēi léih haak séi la  
I was really scared by you
- Ngóh jī* léih yátdihng wáih lám dóu baahnfaat ge  
I know that you definitely will think of a solution
- Juhng yáuh sihgān, hóyih* maahn-máau góng lohk-heui ā  
There's still time, (you) can go on talking slowly
- Léih wáih* tǎih jóu teuiyān mē?  
You will retire early?
- Léih gei-jyuh* sūnsām jā-chē a  
Remember to drive carefully

## Exercise 24.2

Add the appropriate colloquial classifier

Example: **Ngóh jəuh-jó sèhng sāam lāp jūng**  
I've been working a whole three hours

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 Kéuih _____ jái géi chyun wo                   | Her boyfriend is showing an attitude                    |
| 2 Ngóh je-jó géi _____ séui bái go tūhngsìh      | I lent a few hundred dollars to a colleague             |
| 3 Kéuih jeuk dou hóu chih _____ gāi gám          | She dresses like a prostitute                           |
| 4 Léih _____ léuih géi yihng wo                  | Your girlfriend is pretty cool                          |
| 5 Léih gam faai wuhn-jó _____ sán gu             | You got yourself a new one (boyfriend) so soon          |
| 6 Kéuih lau dou dá-jó ngóh géi _____             | He's so angry that he hit me a few times                |
| 7 Kéuih ũkkéi yáuh sāam _____ máhlau-jái         | She's got three monkeys (kids) at home                  |
| 8 Ngóh tūhng kénih bōu-jūk bōu-jó géi _____ jūng | I've been talking on the phone with him for a few hours |

## Exercise 24.3

Add **gwái** to indicate frustration in the following statements and questions.

Example: **Ngóh (gwái) jī mē**      How (on earth) should I know?

- |                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1 Tou hei hóu muhn             | The film was pretty (damn) boring       |
| 2 Bīngó háidouh chòuh a?       | Who (on earth) is making such a racket? |
| 3 Faisih heui la               | There's no (earthly) point in going     |
| 4 Ga chē maaih-jó la           | The car's (damn well) been sold         |
| 5 Léih heui-jó bīndouh a?      | Where (the hell) have you been?         |
| 6 Gam chéuhng-hei ga!          | He's so long-winded!                    |
| 7 Bīngó ga chē jó-jyuh saai a? | Whose (damned) car is blocking the way? |
| 8 Ngóh m̀h lōu la              | I'm (damn well) quitting (my job).      |

# UNIT TWENTY-FIVE

## Code-mixing and loanwords

One of the most colourful features of Cantonese is the incorporation of foreign words – chiefly of English origin, but also from Japanese and other sources. Fluent bilinguals such as professional people and students can often be heard mixing Cantonese and English in the course of the same sentence. This typical bilingual behaviour is known as code-mixing. Because it is associated with high levels of education, residence abroad and a cosmopolitan outlook, it has a certain prestige in some circles. One Hong Kong radio station revels in its bilinguality:

First DJ: Next we have bilingual news

Second DJ: **Haih a, hóu bilingual a** (yes, very bilingual)

A morning radio show is entitled 'jo good morning sun' in which the English 'good morning' is playfully inserted into Cantonese **jóu sàhn** 'good morning'.

Readers should be warned that code-mixing as described in this unit is sometimes frowned upon and felt to be 'not Chinese' or somehow a corrupted form of language. One can hardly ignore the phenomenon, however, in describing Cantonese as it is spoken in Hong Kong. Code-mixing is also found wherever individuals or societies are bilingual, and is a natural part of their use of language. Apart from its sociological interest, code-mixing is quite systematic; it has its own grammar.

The way code-mixing works is that English words are incorporated as far as possible into the sentence patterns of Cantonese. Consequently, Cantonese grammar is applied to English words, rather than vice versa:

- Aspect markers such as **jó**, **jyuh** and **gán** are added to English verbs

**Ngóh yíhging present-jó**  
**Kéuih preg-jó géi loiñ a?**  
**Kéuihdeih yihgá check-gán**

I've already presented  
How long has she been pregnant?  
They're just checking

**Dáng kéuih enjoy-háh**

Let him enjoy it

**Ngóh daai go léui hem in-háh** (interview → in)

I'm taking my daughter to have an interview

**Léih yin lám baahufaat keep-jyuh léih lónhgūng**

You have to think of a way to keep your husband

- Similarly, English verbs may appear with verbal particles such as **fāan**, **yùhn** and **saai**:

**Ngóhdeih ngāam-ngāam shop yùhn fāan lèih**

We're just back from shopping

**Yāt yáuh sūsik, jikhāak call fāan ngóh**

Call me back as soon as there's any news

**Kéuih yám-jó dĩ jáu, sèhng go high saai**

She drank the wine and got all high

- An English combination of verb and object can be separated in accordance with Cantonese grammar:

**Ganhkín budget cut-jó hóu dō**

Mgōi léih hold-jyuh tuih line sīn

Last year's budget was cut a lot

Would you please hold the line for a minute

- English nouns are given an appropriate classifier as in:

**tuih** for 'line' (Cantonese *sīn*)

**jek** for 'model'

**fahn** for 'contract'

- Questions may be formed by reduplicating English verbs and adjectives:

happy → **hēp-nh-hēp-pí?**

like → **lāi-nh-lāikí?**

delay → **de-nh-delay a?**

**Gūngsī de-nh-delay lí go project a?**

Are you happy?

Do you like (it)?

Will you delay (it)?

Is the company delaying the project?

Note that 'like' has been made into two syllables, **lāikí**, while in **hēppí**, the final syllable is in the high rising tone (see below on loanwords)

- The potential constructions with **m̀h** and particle surround an English verb:

<b>Ngóh yihgā check m̀h dóu</b>	I can't check now
<b>Léih predict m̀h dóu</b>	You can't predict

Even English prepositions may appear:

<b>Go sáudóih around yāt chūn m̀n dóu</b>
The handbag is around a thousand dollars

<b>Nī go project haih under ngóh go department ge</b>	(from a civil servant)
This project is under my department	

<b>Nī jek sàhsin gá within géi yaht jauh sing-jó yāt púih</b>	(from a stockbroker)
This miraculous stock has doubled its value within a few days	

Note that these fill a gap in the sense that the nearest Cantonese equivalents would come after the noun (for example, **géi yaht jūoih** 'within a few days').

## Code-mixing as a relief strategy

Up to a point, code-mixing can be a useful strategy for learners who lack the vocabulary they need: just substitute an English word for the missing item, and the result is likely to be understood, at least by fluent bilingual speakers. This works especially well for technical terms; computer and cyber-related words, for example, are regularly used by professionals and students in their conversation despite the availability of translation equivalents:

ICQ (I seek you, communication software on Internet)	(no Cantonese equivalent)
IT (Information Technology)	jīseun fōgeih
CD/CD-ROM	(dihnlóuh) gwóngdíp
cyber-classroom	hēuiyih gaasūt
upload	seuhng chyùhn
download	hah joi

One of the reasons Cantonese speakers mix is that the Cantonese terms are not well known or are even clumsy. For example, **chyùhn-jān** translates 'fax'. The verb **fék** and the noun **fék-sī** are preferred, while CD ROM seems simpler than **dihnlóuh gwóngdíp**.

## Loanwords

Although we have generally been writing them in standard English spelling, the English words often undergo some changes to make them sound closer to Cantonese words. The word 'class', for example, may be pronounced **klā-sí** or even **kā-sí** in the sense of having class. By this process, the English words eventually become assimilated to Cantonese and become part of the everyday vocabulary, as in the case of words such as **bāsi** (bus) and **diksí** (taxi). Known as loanwords, these are used by monolingual Cantonese speakers as well as by bilinguals.

**Kéuih jeuigahn sīk-jó go lengléui, hóu hēppí**  
He recently got to know a pretty girl and is very happy

**tái show → tái sōu**  
show qualification → sōn kōlī

**Gāmlín bahtin làuhhàhng nī go colour tùngng sexy look, dáng daaihgā hóyih sōu-sōu kōlī**  
(lit. this year summer popular this colour and sexy look, let everyone can show show qualification)  
This summer this colour and sexy look are in, letting people show off their figure  
(programme on fashion magazines)

If a word ends in a consonant, usually a new syllable with high rising tone is created:

fax → **fēk-sí** (noun), but **fēk** when used as a verb:

**Ngóh fēk fahn sānching-bíu béi léih ā**  
Let me fax the application form to you

gas → <b>gēsí</b>	<b>sāai gēsí</b>	waste one's breath
taste → <b>tēisí</b>	<b>móuh tēisí</b>	without taste
bus → <b>bāsi</b>	<b>daap bāsi</b>	catch the bus
size → <b>sāaisí</b>	<b>Jenk mātýéh sāaisí?</b>	What size do you wear?
fuse → <b>fusí</b>	<b>sīu fēusí</b>	burn the fuse
face → <b>fēisí</b>	<b>móuh saai fēisí</b>	completely lose face
tip(s) → <b>típsí</b>	<b>béi típsí</b>	give a tip
fans → <b>fēusí</b>	<b>Ngóh haih léih ge chiukāp fēusí</b>	I'm your super fan
film → <b>fēilám</b>	<b>máaih fēilám</b>	buy (photographic) film
fail → <b>fēihláu</b>	<b>Gām chi yauh fēihláu àh?</b>	Did you flunk again this time?



pass → <b>pāsìh</b>	A: <b>Léih hán sèhug dím a?</b>	How did the exam go?
	B: <b>Pāsìh lō</b>	Passed
deuce → <b>dfūsìh</b>	<b>Daih sei guhk dfūsìh</b>	The fourth game is deuce
copy this file → <b>kāp nī go fāilōu</b>		
print out → <b>pīn chēut làih</b>		
short-circuited → <b>sōt-jó</b>		
confirm → <b>fīrm</b> (result of shortening)		

**Tingyaht sin fīrm dóu go itiu wo** (from a travel agent)  
 (lit. tomorrow only confirm the itinerary)  
 I can't confirm the itinerary until tomorrow

## Japanese words and phrases

As many aspects of Japanese culture have infiltrated Cantonese society, some of the related Japanese expressions have been adopted:

<b>kālāai-ōukēi</b>	karaoke
<b>sauhsī</b>	sushi
<b>wūdūng (mīhn)</b>	udon (noodles)
<b>sah-yoh-lā-lāh</b>	goodbye (based on sayonara, with n becoming l)

More commonly, Japanese phrases are translated literally using the Cantonese pronunciations for the Japanese Kanji characters:

<b>yī-jī-bāan</b>	super, first-rate (based on <b>i chī baan</b> )
<b>sān-dāngchēuhag</b>	new product (lit. new arrival)
<b>bitsaat-geih</b>	secret lethal weapon (lit. sure winning technique)
<b>chō-táiyihm</b>	first experience
<b>daaih chēut hyut</b>	big sale (lit. big out blood)
<b>daaih got yáhn</b>	big sale (lit. big cut ...)
<b>gāan-bā-dē</b>	cheer on
<b>séjān-jaahp</b>	portfolio, series of pictures (sometimes nude)
<b>yáhnhei (gāpsing)</b>	(sudden rise in) popularity

The pattern **yāt juhk** 'one race' refers to a certain category of people:

<b>séuhng-bāan yāt juhk</b>	(lit. go work one race) working people
<b>keep-fít yāt juhk</b>	the keep-fit crowd
<b>dāan-sān yāt juhk</b>	the single crowd
<b>baahu-leung yāt juhk</b>	beauty queens

## Exercise 25.1

Using the English verb as given in the translation, add the verb and aspect marker or verbal particle:

Example: Ngóh yíhng present-jé la I've already presented

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 Léih _____ yisàng meih a?                     | Have you called the doctor yet?                            |
| 2 Faai di _____ ngāam go<br>mahtmáh lă          | Set the code back to the correct<br>one quickly            |
| 3 Kéuih haih-maih _____ a?                      | Has he gone mad? ( <i>lit.</i> is he short-<br>circuited?) |
| 4 Jingfú _____ lí go policy                     | The government is reviewing the<br>policy                  |
| 5 Ngóh tùhng kéuih _____                        | I've swapped with him                                      |
| 6 Ngóh _____ kéuih géi chí                      | I've dated him a few times                                 |
| 7 Léih jéung cheque yíhng _____                 | Your cheque has already cleared                            |
| 8 Kéuih ngāam-ngāam _____<br>fahn gūng          | He has just quit his job                                   |
| 9 Bātyùh léih _____ làih béi ngóh<br>lă?        | Why don't you send it back to me?                          |
| 10 Gūngsī yíhng _____ lí géi jek sǎn<br>product | The company is promoting these<br>new products             |

## Exercise 25.2

Form questions based on the English verbs and adjectives provided

Example: Entertaining:

Kéuih gokdāk hóm full He feels full

→ Kéuih gokdāk full-mh-full a? Does he feel full?

- Kéuih tùhng léih hóm friend (fén)  
He and you are friendly
- Léih predict dóm ngóh séung dóm a?  
Can you predict how I want it?
- Kéuihdeih jéuigahn hóm busy  
They've been busy lately
- Lóuhbáan iavite di client hemi dá golf  
The boss invited the clients to play golf
- Ngóh hóm enjoy tái kéuih di e-mail  
I enjoy reading his e-mail

- 6 **Lóuhháau tái yùhn go report, hón impress**  
When the boss finished reading the report he was impressed
- 7 **Go exam hón easy a**  
The exam was easy
- 8 **Kéuih bái fān hón fair ga**  
He's fair in marking
- 9 **Go show gau saai entertaining**  
The show is pretty entertaining
- 10 **Kéuih mē delete go file**  
He won't delete the file

### Exercise 25.3

Identify the English loanwords in the following sentences (transcribed in Yale romanization):

- 1 **Go fānlóu mgin-jó wo**
- 2 **Deui hàaih haih gafē-sīk ge**
- 3 **Léih séung-mēh-séung síhk jēléi a?**
- 4 **Ngóhdeih daap wēnjái heui hóu mēh hón a?**
- 5 **Dí sāam-māhn-yá maaih saai la**
- 6 **Léih ūkkéi géi hoah lūmbá a?**
- 7 **Kéuih jing dī sālét hóu hóu-mēih**
- 8 **Ngóu lóuhgūng hóm jāngyi síhk Faatgwok jísí**
- 9 **Léih máaih-jó yinsō meih a?**
- 10 **Ngóh giu-jó jāudáyú-tōng**

# KEY TO EXERCISES

## *Unit 1 Consonants and vowels*

**Exercise 1.4** 1 làahm-sih 2 go-hóh 3 yùh-sāan 4 rnh gok wuih-yh 5 óh  
lāu go léih 6 Gūn Tòhng 7 Góngsǎi 8 Mh Méih-laih 9 Gok Fu-sihng  
10 Làahm-ging

## *Unit 2 Tone contours*

**Exercise 2.1** 1 low rising 23 vs. 33 mid level 2 low rising 23 vs. 25 high  
rising 3 low falling 21 vs. 55 high level 4 low rising 23 vs. 22 low level  
5 high level 55 vs. 22 low level 6 mid level 33 vs. 22 low level 7 high level  
55 vs. 25 high rising 8 high rising 25 vs. 23 low rising

## *Unit 3 Changed tones*

**Exercise 3.1** 1 **chau-cháu-déi** rather smelly 2 **laahn-láan-déi** a bit broken  
3 **waaih-wái-déi** not working very well 4 **guih-gúi-déi** a bit tired 5 **lyuhn-  
lyún-déi** rather messy 6 **chèuhng-chéung-déi** rather long 7 **lèuhng-léung-déi**  
rather cool 8 **hàhn-hán-déi** rather itchy 9 **làhm-lám-déi** rather tender, soft  
10 **lùhng-lúng-déi** a bit deaf 11 **laah-t-láat-déi** rather spicy hot 12 **mùhng-  
múng-déi** understand a little (not fully understand) 13 **jī-jī-déi** know a  
little (about something) 14 **gwōng-gwōng-déi** rather bright 15 **sín-sín-déi**  
rather slippery

**Exercise 3.2** 1 gong-tfú 2 hóh-méi 3 gauh-lín 4 tóh-mán 5 ònchyùhn-dáai  
6 tō-hái 7 goklōk-táu 8 máaih-láu 9 taaiyèuhng ngáahn-géng 10 Hēung-  
góng-déi 11 sǎnmán 12 góján 13 gójahn-sí 14 diht lohk déi 15 yáuh yāt  
pái 16 sǎn-léung 17 sǎn-lóng 18 sí-dái 19 dá màhjúek 20 boují tǎuhfú

**Exercise 3.3** 1 háp 2 tuih 3 díp 4 bóng 5 pín 6 dihp 7 tíu 8 hahp 9 pùhn 10 pún

**Exercise 3.4** 1 tungmān 2 pòhpō 3 sái-ngaahng-pāai 4 goklōk 5 lèuh-leui 6 móuh géi lói/lói 7 hēunghá-mui 8 mòuh-mòu gūngjái 9 ngáahn-yāp mou 10 sáuji méi

#### *Unit 4 Reduplication*

**Exercise 4.1** 1 Gāan ōk kéih-kéih-léih-léih 2 Go léui baahk-baahk-jehng-jehng 3 Tou hei pōu-pōu-tūng-tūng 4 Ngóhdeih ūkkéi yuht-yiht-laaui-laaui 5 Gó gāan hohkhaauh séi-séi-bāan-bāan 6 Lóuhbāan gāmyaht máng-máng-jáng-jáng 7 Go díksí sǐgǐ chōu-chōu-lóuh-lóuh 8 Kéuih go jái gōu-gōu-daaui-daaui 9 Ngóh fahn gūng ōn-ōn-dihng-dihng 10 Gó go móhngkàuh mihngsǐng daaii-daaui-jek-jek

**Exercise 4.2** 1 Kéuih sailóu hàhm-hàhm-wùh-wùh daapyng wàahn chín 2 Kéuihdeih gāan-gāan-dāan-dāan bouji sǎn ōk 3 Kéuih fuhmóuh sǎn-sǎn-fú-fú yéuhng daaii kéuih 4 Nǐ gāan gūngsǐ jing-jing-sǐk-sǐk syūnbou pochāan 5 Ngóh hēimohng léih kǎhn-kǎhn-lihk-lihk duhk-syū 6 Kéuih hīng-hīng-sūng-sūng góí saai dī gyūn 7 Jūk léih seuhn-seuhn-leih-leih ló dóu hohk-wái 8 Dáng ngóh chēuhng-chēuhng-sai-sai gáaisǐk béi léih tēng

**Exercise 4.3** 1f 2c 3g 4b 5d 6a 7h 8c 9j 10i

**Exercise 4.4** 1 Kéuihdeih chǎn-chǎn-maht-maht, yīn-yīn-ngahn-ngahn 2 Gó go làahmyán sǎhn-sǎhn-bei-bei, gwái-gwái-syū-syū 3 Ngóh lóuhgūng sīhng-sīhng-saht-saht, táan-táan-baahk-baahk 4 Nǐ go jokgǎ sé ge yéi hūng-hūng-duhng-duhng, kèih-kèih-gwaai-gwaai 5 Kéuih go yéung yīhm-yīhm-sūk-sūk, láahng-láahng-ngouh-ngouh 6 Gāan ōk gōn-gōn-jehng-jehng, jing-jing-chàih-chàih 7 Léih go léuih-pàhngyáuh sǐ-sǐ-màhn-màhn, daaii-daaui-fōng-fōng 8 Kéuih gāan seuihfóng syū-syū-fuhk-fuhk, hōi-hōi-yèuhng-yèuhng 9 Léih go beisyū mǎ-mǎ-fū-fū, fūh-fūh-lūk-lūk 10 Ngóh sailóu gū-gū-waahk-waahk, gwái-gwái-máh-máh

**Exercise 4.5** 1i 2k 3a 4f 5h 6d 7m and b 8j and l 9g and c 10e and n

#### *Unit 5 Word formation*

**Exercise 5.1** 1g 2h 3j/i 4b 5a 6i 7c 8d 9c 10f

**Exercise 5.2** 1 yáuh-yíyih 2 móuh-lfu 3 yáuh-mahntàih 4 móuh-loih-sihng 5 yáuh-bánmeih 6 móuh-lèuhngsām 7 yáuh-lcih 8 móuh yùhnjak 9 yáuh-haahn 10 móuh-jaakyahm-gám

**Exercise 5.3** 1 Jùng Ngàhn (or Ngán) 2 Dahk Sáu 3 Mái Hòhng 4 A Sih 5 Sái Scuh 6 Bák Daaiah 7 Dcih Tit 8 Gong Dăng

### Unit 6 Verb-Object compounds

**Exercise 6.1** 1 sihk-faahn/yéh 2 tiu-móuh 3 waahk-wá 4 sé-scun 5 béi-chín 6 chùng-lèuhng 7 fāan-hohk 8 kīng-gái 9 yàuh-séui 10 cheung-gō

**Exercise 6.2** 1 jyú-gán-faahn 2 faat-gán pèihhei 3 fong-jó-ga 4 duhk-gwo-syū 5 hàahng-yùhn-gūngsī 6 yám-gwo-jáu 7 háau-gwo-sih la 8 Dá-jó-dihnwá

**Exercise 6.3** 1 Syū kéuih m̃h sīk gaau 2 Sīngkèih-yaht sīk dōu móuh dāk yāu 3 Syūga ngóhdeih ga dōu móuh dāk fong 4 Kéuih taaitái jái yauh msái chau, gūng yauh msái fāan 5 Jái chih-jóu dōu yiu sāang 6 Pēigēi yauh m̃h daap, chē yauh m̃h jǎ 7 Kéuih sāmchihng m̃h hóu, faahn yauh m̃h sihk, gaau yauh m̃h fan 8 Léih seun yauh m̃h sé, dihnwá yauh m̃h dá 9 Kéuih jōng yauh m̃h fa, tàuh yauh m̃h chēui

### Unit 7 Adjectives and stative verbs

**Exercise 7.1** 1 Ngóh hóu dāamsām kéuih go behng (his illness) 2 Kéuih hóu sihmouh léih dī jái léui (your children) 3 Ngóh m̃h gēng gahtját ga (of cockroaches) 4 Kéuih làahn-pàhngyáu dahkbiht gánjēung kéuih ge gihnhōng (her health) 5 Kéuih séung chyun dī lēng-mū-jái (young girls) 6 Léih suhk bīngō yīsāng a? (which doctor) 7 Ngóh m̃h jī kéuih mōhng mātýéh wo (what) 8 Hóu dō yāhn dōuhgēih ngóh gāhō (my elder brother)

**Exercise 7.2** 1 Kéuih jouh yùhn sáuseuht yihgā leng fāan 2 Kéuih yihchih leng-gwo 3 Léih hóuchih leng-jó bo 4 Jeuk-jyuh gihn sán sām, léih sēhng go leng saai 5 Ngóh mōhng m̃aaih gām chí jē 6 Ngóh jeugahn mōhng-jó 7 Ngóh gām lín meih mōhng-gwo 8 Ngóh hōichí mōhng fāan dī 9 Lí p̃aah t̃inhei lyúhn-jó 10 Yihgā lyúhn fāan saai

**Exercise 7.3** 1 Ngóh hóu làahn túhng kéuih hahpjok 2 Kéuih hóu yùhngyih lám dóu daapngon 3 Kéuihdeih hóu yùhngyih yēhng-jó m̃ chēuhng béichoí 4 Nī go yúhn-gín sailouhjái hóu làahn yuhng dóu 5 Kéuihdeih hóu yùhngyi béi yāhn ngāk 6 Chín hóu làahn m̃hnhjūk yāt

go yàhn jǎnjǐng ge sēuiyiu 7 Yigā ge tǐnhei, go go dòu hóu yìhngy; sēungfūng  
8 Dī yǎmngohk hóu yùhngyi lihng ngóh lám fāan yìhchihh ge sǐh 9 Léih  
yìhwàih ngóh hóu yùhngyi yǐngsìhng yàhn jòuh-yéh àh? 10 Lǐ jǔng yàhn  
hóu làahn hái nǐdòuh sāngchýùh

### Unit 8 Classifiers revisited

**Exercise 8.1** 1 gāan séjihlàn 2 jēun baahk-jáu 3 tou sǎi-jōng 4 daahp  
sǎn syū/dēui sǎn syū 5 dī sósìh/chāu (bunch) sósìh 6 jēung sǎnfánjing  
7 fūng gaaisiuh seun 8 dī hohksāang/bāan hohksāang 9 ga páau-chē  
10 jek lǐnhghā

**Exercise 8.2** 1 Go-go hohksāang dòu jáu-jó 2 Tou-tou hei dòu hóu muhn  
3 Tuih-tuih tàihmuhk dòu nh làahn 4 Jēung-jēung tóu dòu bēi yàhn dehng-  
jó 5 Ga-ga gēi dòu baau saai 6 Kéuih bún-bún syū dòu hóu hóu-maaih  
7 Kéuih gihn-gihn sām dòu hóu gwai 8 Hahp-hahp tóng dòu bāu dāk  
hóu leng 9 Ngóhdeih bún-bún syū dòu yiu tái 10 Ngóhdeih yeuhng-yeuhng  
dím-sām dòu giu-jó

**Exercise 8.3** 1d 2f 3b 4c 5a 6e

### Unit 9 Topic and focus

**Exercise 9.1** A: 1 Nǐ bún sǐusyut dī hohksāang meih tái-gwo 2 Go sai  
léui kéuih jèui sek 3 Gāan ùk kéuih hóu nh sé dāk maaih 4 Gúdín  
yǎmngohk ngóh nh sǐk yǎnséung 5 Kéuih ùkkéi yàhn ngóh hóu suhk B:  
6 Ngóh gǎmyaht ge sǎnmán nh dǎkhàahn tái 7 Ngóhdeih Yahmán sǐk  
sǐu-sǐu 8 Kéuih gongkàhm hohk-jó sām lǐn 9 Kéuih gam làahn ge yéh  
nh wúih jòuh 10 Léih wahnduhng yǐnggōi dō dī jòuh

**Exercise 9.2** 1 Ngóh lǐn jǐpiu-bóu dou daai màaih làih 2 Kéuih lǐn  
yú dòu nh sǐk jǐng 3 Kéuihdeih lǐn Chín Séui Wāan dòu meih heui-gwo  
4 Gíngchaat lǐn go yǐsǎng dòu nh seun 5 Kéuih lǐn ga chē dòu je bēi  
ngóh 6 Ngóh gēng dou lǐn láahngghohh dòu biu màaih 7 Kéuih lǐn go  
gúdúng fǎjēun dòu yiu maaih màaih 8 Ngóh lóuhgūng lǐn Chìuhjǎu-wá  
dòu hohk màaih 9 Kéuih ngoh dou lǐn gaakyeh sung dòu suhk màaih  
10 Lóuhbáan hāan dou lǐn láahnghei dòu nh hōi

**Exercise 9.3** 1 sin 2 sin 3 jauh 4 sin 5 jauh 6 sin 7 sin 8 jauh

### Unit 10 Using *jěung*

**Exercise 10.1** 1 Ngóh jěung gūngfo gāu bēi sīnsāang 2 Kéuih jěung go mahtmah wuhn-jó 3 Ngóh jěung go wuhháu chéuisi-jó 4 Ngóh séung jěung fuk wá gwa héi 5 Tin-waih jěung go yahtkèih gó-jó 6 Kéuih jūngyū jěung gāan fóng jāp hóu 7 Ngóh yiu jěung dī syū ló fāan heui hohkhaauh 8 Mùhmú jěung dī fā chaap hái fājēun douh 9 Kéuih jěung dī seun sǎu-màaih saai 10 Lóuhbāan jěung dī chín chyùhn-jó yahp ngàhnhòhng

**Exercise 10.2** 1 Kéuih jěung gāan fóng maat dāk hóu gǒnjehng 2 Gūngsī jāung go gachihh gó-jó hóu dō chí 3 Ngóh jěung bún syū yàuh tauh dou méuh tái-jó léuhng chí 4 Kéuib jěung dī tauhfaat jín dāk hóu dyún 5 Kéuih jěung fahn láibmaht sǎu-màaih-jó léuhng yaht 6 Kéuih jěung tuih yú jīng-jó sah p fānjūng 7 Dī gūngyàhn jěung chyùhn ūk yàuh-jó yāt chí 8 Ngóh jěung sǎu gǒ fāanyihk-jó géi chí 9 Lóuhbāan jěung go gwónggou dāng-jó sǎam yaht 10 Kéuih jěung go léui baahn dou hóu leng

**Exercise 10.3** 1 (Léih) jěung gihh sǎam ló lohk làih 2 Ngóhdeih jěung dī laahpsaap dām-jó kéuih là 3 (Léih) faai dī jěung dī gyún gó saai kéuih 4 Jikhāk jěung go dihochih wuhn-jó kéuih 5 Faai-faai-cheui-cheui jěung gāan fóng jāp hóu kéuih 6 Chan yih jěung dī jūng yeuhk yám-jó kéuih 7 Jěung go syū bǎau song dǎi hái deihhá 8 Jei hóu jěung dī tauhfaat dihn-jó kéuih 9 Jěung dī wǐjōu sǎam sái saai kéuih 10 Jěung gāan ūk jōngsǎu hóu kéuih

### Unit 11 Serial verbs

**Exercise 11.1** 1 Ngóh hóiyh bōng léih sé gaai-siuh seun 2 Léih yiu yuhng lihk dá go bō 3 Bōng ngóh gahm jūng 4 Léih wán/yuhng jek yauh sǎu gahm-jyuh jěung jí là 5 Chéng léih yuhng lóuh lám háh yéh 6 Kéuih móuh sīhgaan doih léih séuhng-tòhng 7 Ga páau chē yuhng làih béichoi ge 8 Léih yiu yuhng dō dī yihm yip tuih yú 9 Kéuih wán/yuhng jek geuk dǒng-jyuh douh mùhn 10 Léih hó-mh-hóiyh doih ngóh mahnhauh kéuih a?

**Exercise 11.2** 1 Dáng ngóh bōng léih hōi mùhn là Let me open the door for you 2 Kéuih heung ngóh kauhfan He proposed to me 3 Dī chānchik doih kénih gāu jōu The relatives pay the rent on his behalf 4 Yisāng bōng ngóh hōi-dōn sāang-jái The surgeon performed a Caesarean for me 5 Gó go hohksūang gān ngóh hohk tin-móuh That student learns dancing with me 6 Nī jěung hóibou yukng làih syūnchyuh gān sǎn gūngsī This poster is to publicize the new company 7 Fahmóuh waihjǒ jǎiléui bok-mehng jaahn chín Parents strive to earn money for their children's sake 8 Ngóh dī tūhngsī dahng ngóh hōisām My colleagues feel happy



for me 9 *Kéuih sèhngyaht deni-jyah léih góug hàahmsáp siuwá* He always tells dirty jokes to my face 10 *Kéuih pùih ngóh tái yaht-lohk* He watches the sunset with me

**Exercise 11.3** 1 *Kéuih wáu jek geuk (laih) sòn paakjí* He uses his foot to count the beat 2 *A-Ying yuhng sánsin séuigwó (laih) jough sáléut* Ying uses fresh fruit to make a salad 3 *Gaansauh héi sihgaau ngóhdeih (heui) tóuleuhn tuih táihmukh* The lecturer gave us time to discuss the topic 4 *Kéuihdeih heui leuhtsi-lauh baahn sámjukk kèih-fán* They went to the solicitors to sign the papers for divorce 5 *Dí geijé làih Hèunggóng jough fóngmahn* The reporters came to Hong Kong to do interviews 6 *Léih m̀h hóu yuhng sáp bou (heui) maat go gongkàhm* Don't use a wet cloth to wipe the piano 7 *Go behagyàh m̀m̀h go láihbaai dòu heui yiyún jough gímchàh* The patient goes to the hospital every week to have a check-up 8 *Dí chànchùk làih ngóhdeih úkkéi taam ngóh a-màh* The relatives came to our house to visit my grandmother 9 *Kéuih téuijin ngóh heui daaih-hohk duhk yáhyih-hohk* He recommended me to go to the university to study linguistics 10 *Ngóh fuhmóuh làih ngóh súkse wáu ngóh* My parents are coming to my hall of residence to find me

### Unit 12 Aspect markers

**Exercise 12.1** 1 *Ngóh yiu káp-háh sánsin hūng-hei* 2 *Ngóh sánsāang chē-hóih ngóh fāan-gūng* 3 *Léih yiu jyuyi-háh léih ge gihnhōng* 4 *Ngóh jyuh-hóih lītauh, m̀h séung būn* 5 *Ngóhdeih heui Hóih-yèuhng Gūngyún wáan-háh* 6 *Léih gú-háh ngóh géi dō seiwí* 7 *Kéuih jǎ-hóih Yidaaihleih páau-chē* 8 *Léih yínggōi góih-háh léih ge waaih jaahpgwaan* 9 *Kéuih jeuk-hóih m̀hng-pàaih sām* 10 *Ngóhdeih heui tóuhsyūgwún chāamgwún-háh sìn*

**Exercise 12.2** 1 *Léih yiu lihn-háh lí sáu gō* 2 *Léih heui mahn-háh lá* 3 *Léih si-háh gihn sām sìn* 4 *Ngóh yiu lám-háh sìn* 5 *Mgōi léih dǎng-háh sìn lá* 6 *Ngóhdeih tau-háh sìn* 7 *Léih mǎhn-háh dī hēungséui* 8 *Faai dī maat-háh faai mihn lá*

**Exercise 12.3** 1 *Ga gēi yuhng léuhng yuhng jauh waaih-jó* 2 *Pín mǎn góih léuhng góih jauh góih hóu lá* 3 *Kéuih góng-góng-háh dīhnwá, yáuh yáhn háau-m̀hnh* 4 *Kéuih sihk-sihk-háh faahn dahtyíhn wáhn-jó* 5 *Kéuih sé-léuhng-sé jauh sé hóu lá* 6 *Gihn baahk séutsām jeuk-léuhng-jeuk jauh wíjōu-jó* 7 *Go hohksāang séuhng-séuhng-háh tòhng fan-jeuhk-jó* 8 *Jēung chòhng fan-léuhng-fan jauh laahn-jó* 9 *Ngóhdeih jyuh-jyuh-háh, faatgok gāan úk lauh séui* 10 *Síu-tàih-kàhm, kéuih láai-léuhng-lāai jauh m̀h láai*

**Exercise 12.4** 1 Kéuih siu hci-séuhng-làih góján, go yéung hóu tihm  
 2 Ngóh m̃h hóyh joi ngàaih loh-k-heui 3 Tinhei jyun hci-séuhng-làih, hóu  
 yùhngyih behng 4 Léihdeih joi chònh loh-k-heui, ngóh janh giu gíngchaat  
 làih 5 Seui-gúk chàh-hci-scui séuhng-làih, janh màhfaahn 6 Gám yéung  
 aau loh-k-heui móuh yuhng 7 Ngóhdeih kyutdihng m̃h dáng loh-k-heui  
 8 Kéuih yāt chī-hci-sin séuhng-làih, māt dōu jōuh dāk chēut 9 Kéuihdeih aar-  
 hci-gāau séuhng-làih go-go dōu hóu mhōisām 10 Ngóh sē m̃h dōu loh-k-heui

**Exercise 12.5** 1 Kéuih yauh dīt chān 2 Ngóh láu chān jek geuk 3 Lohk-  
 chān-yúh gāan ūk dōu wúih hóu sǎp 4 Ngóh bēi yāhn cháai chān 5 Go  
 sailouhjái pūk chān 6 Kéuih yám-chān-jáu dōu jeui 7 Ngóhdeih bēi  
 taaiyēuhng saai chān 8 Kéuih háau-chān-sih dōu m̃h hahpgaa 9 Mhóu  
 ngoh-chān go bihbi 10 Kéuih tái chān gó tou hei dōu haam

### Unit 13 Comparisons

**Exercise 13.1** 1 hci-kehk móuh bēi-kehk gam hóu-tái 2 hahtin móuh  
 dūngtīn gam chēuhng 3 yīsāng móuh wuhsih gam mōhng 4 Náuyek jitjau  
 móuh Hēunggóng gam faai 5 lihksi-haih móuh jithohk-haih gam yùhngyih  
 yahp 6 Wohnggok móuh Jimsājéui gam bīk-yāhn

**Exercise 13.2** A: 1 Dīksi dihg fóchē faai dī a? 2 Gātihng dihg sihyihp  
 juhngyiu dī a? 3 Jūng yeuhk dihg sāi yeuhk yáuh-haauh dī a? 4 Daap-  
 fēigēi dihg daap-syūhn syūfuhk dī a? 5 Duhk-syū dihg jōuh-yéh sǎnfú  
 dī a? B: 6 Go léui yáuh-móuh go jái gam pa-cháu a? 7 Tái dihsih yáuh-  
 móuh hàahng-gūngsī gam sāi-sihgaan a? 8 Seuhngghoi yáuh-móuh Bākgīng  
 gam yūhn a? 9 Jūngdaaih yáuh-móuh Góngdaaih gam yáuh-móng a?  
 10 fōwaahn pín yáuh-móuh hūngbou pín gam chigik a?

**Exercise 13.3** 1 Dī gāsī taai pèhng/pèhng dāk jaih/pèhng gwotàuh  
 2 Chau-jái taai-(gwo) sǎnfú/sǎnfú dāk jaih 3 Kéuih jyú ge sung taai  
 hàahm/hàahm gwotàuh/hàahm dāk jaih 4 Yuhgwán-ngohk taai chòuh/  
 chòuh dāk jaih 5 Kéuih hàahng dou taai guih/guih dāk jaih 6 Hēunggóng  
 bin dāk taai faai/faai dāk jaih 7 Jingfú taaidouh gihk douh/taai-gwo  
 kēuhng-ngaahn 8 Kéuih làaih-lái taai làahn fuhksih 9 Ngóh ūkkéi ge  
 mahntàih taai fókjaahp 10 Sinsaaung góng ge yēh gihk douh sām-ou/taai-  
 gwo sām-ou

### Unit 14 Resultative and causative sentences with *dou*

**Exercise 14.1** A: 1 hoisam dou fan m̃h jeuhk so happy that (she) can't  
 sleep 2 geng don m̃h gám fān ūkkéi so scared that (he) dared not go

home 3 **lâu dou paak tòih paak daug** so angry that (he) banged the table and chair 4 **mángjáng dou lyún gam laauh yàuh** so frustrated that (he) scolded people indiscriminately 5 **syūfuhk dou fau-jeuhk-jó** so comfortable that (she) fell asleep B: 1 **Go hói-gíng leng dou wàhn** The sea view is breathtakingly beautiful 2 **Gāan ãk gōnjehng dou fēi héi** The house is so devastatingly clean 3 **Fūk wá daaih dou móuh yàuh seun** The picture is incredibly big 4 **Héunggóng hah̄tín yíht dou dīng-nh̄-senhn̄** Hong Kong summer is unbearably hot 5 **Kéuih dī chíu dô dou sái nh̄ saai** He has more money than he can spend (Note: the sentences can all be left as they stand, as in **Kéuih dī chíu dô dou ā** ... He has so much money.)

**Exercise 14.2** 1 **Ni jek yeuhk líhng dou léih yuht lāih yuht leng** This medicine will make you look better and better 2 **Ngóhdeih ge jéungbán dô dou yàhn yàhn yáuh fán** Our prizes are so many that there's something for everyone 3 **Ni go jítmuhk jingchói dou léih nh̄ seun** This programme is unbelievably brilliant 4 **Ngóhdeih jáulāuh ge dím-sām síh dou léih lém-lém-leih** Our restaurant's dim sum will make your mouth water (*lit.* lick your tongue) 5 **Sung fūyàhn dī syū maaih dou tyúhn saai sñh** Madam Sung's books sell so well that all the copies are gone from the market

**Exercise 14.3** 1 **gwai dou haak séi léih** so expensive that it'll shock you 2 **chí dou mã-sāung yāt yeuhng** so much alike that they look like twins 3 **behng dou síh nh̄ loh̄k yéh** so sick that it can't eat 4 **yí dou msái síh yeuhk dôu hōyñ fan dôu** cured to the extent that he can sleep without medication 5 **johng dou chē-mùhn dôu laahn màaih** so damaged that the car door was broken 6 **hohk dou sík góng siuwá** I've learnt Chinese to the point where I can tell jokes 7 **láu dou dá laahu saai dī yéh** so angry that she broke everything 8 **mòhng dou hái sahtyihmsāt gwo yé** so busy that he spent the night in the laboratory

**†Exercise 14.4** 1 **Fūng seun tái dou ngóh hóu lâu** 2 **Pín mán sé dou ngóh ngāau saai tauh** 3 **Jēun jáu yám dou kéuih jeui-jó** 4 **Go sahtyihm jouh dou ngóh jauh̄lèih chísin** 5 **Jēung chòhng fan dou ngóh hóu msyūfuhk** 6 **Go dihnsih tái dou ngóh ngáahn fā** 7 **Gó dī gwái-gú tēng dou kéuih fan nh̄ dóu** 8 **Ni dī yeuhk síh dou kéuih wàhn-tòh-tòh**

### Unit 15 Quantification

**Exercise 15.1** 1 **Kéuih mātýéh beimaht dôu jī ge** 2 **Gāan-gāan gūngsí dôu móuh sausik** 3 **Ngóh go go jih dôu nh̄ sik duhk** 4 **Ngóh fuhmóuh go go jáuléu dôu gam sek** 5 **Kéuih fún-fún sán chē dôu nh̄ múnnyí** 6 **Lóuhbáan tūh-tūh sou dôu gai dāk hóu chingchó** 7 **Kéuih go-go yuht dôu jéunshí**

gāau-jōu 8 Kéuih chi-chi dōu jāang-juh màaih-dāan 9 Sô yáu ge gwai-bān  
dōu chōh saai hāidōuh 10 Sô yáuh ge jyuyilihk dōu jaahpjūng hái léih  
dōuh

**Exercise 15.2** 1 Go-go sigēi dōu yáuh tūnghàhng-jing 2 Jek-jek mǎau  
ngoh dōu jūngyi 3 Ngóhdeih gāan-gāan jáulāuh dōu heui-gwo/Gāan-gāan  
jáulāuh ngóhdeih dōu heui-gwo 4 Kéuih tūh-tūh tàihmuhk dōu sīk daap/  
Tūh-tūh taihmuhk dōu sīk daap 5 Ngóh jek-jek sáuji dōu tung dōu séi 6  
Fūng-fūng seun dōu tái saai la 7 Fūk-fūk wá dōu hóu yáuh-yísi 8 Sáu-sáu  
gō dōu hóu ngāam-tēng 9 Pō-pō syuh dōu yáuh jeukjái jyuh ge 10 Dīhp-  
dīhp chōi dōu hóu hēung

**Exercise 15.3** 1 Léih yiu dō dī tūhng jáilēui kīng-gá/Léih yiu tūhng  
jáilēui dō dī kīng-gái 2 Ngóhdeih chéng dō-jó yāt wáih tói ge yáhn  
3 Gǎmyaht làih sū-jó go gūdtūng 4 Léih hó-mh-hóyh góng sū dī, jōuh dō  
dī a? 5 Léih jeui hóu sū dī dá màh-jéuk/Léih jeui hóu dá sū dī màh-jéuk  
6 Chéng léih dō dī gwāansām háh ūkkéi yáhn 7 Ngóh séung dō dī làuh hái  
ūkkéi yāusīk háh or Ngóh séung làuh dō dī hái ūkkéi yāusīk háh 8 Jeuihahn  
sihk sū-jó Sǎigung dī hōisīn 9 Hēunggóng gām lū syúga dō-jó hóu dō  
yáuh-haak 10 Gāan ūk dō-jó (yāt) go fóng, sū-jó (yāt) go gūngyáhn

**Exercise 15.4** 1 saai 2 saai 3 màaih 4 màaih 5 màaih 6 saai 7 màaih  
8 saai 9 saai 10 màaih

### Unit 16 Negative sentences

**Exercise 16.1** 1 Kéuih m̄h/móuh joi tái gó go yīsāng 2 Léih m̄hóu joi  
ngāak jihgái 3 Nī gihn sih m̄h hóyh joi tō lohk-heui 4 M̄hóu joi gam yáih  
lā 5 Kéuih go sēungháu m̄h joi tung 6 Kéuih gǎmyaht móuh joi faat pèihhei  
7 Léih msái joi gáaisīk 8 Ngóhdeih msái joi jiugu kéuihdeih

**Exercise 16.2** 1 Máih/mhóu sǎu-sin jyuh lā 2 Ngóh m̄h/móuh dásyun  
būn ūk jyuh 3 M̄hóu sǎu màaih fūng seun jyuh (lā) 4 Ngóhdeih meih/m̄h  
heui dāk jyuh 5 M̄hóu faht go hohksāang jyuh (lā) 6 M̄hóu dá hōi dī  
láiuhmaht jyuh (lā) 7 Máih/mhóu séuhng chòhng fan-gaau jyuh lā 8 Kéuih  
meih wán dōu gūng jyuh 9 Léih m̄h yīnggōi fonghci jyuh 10 Ngóh msái  
hohk Póutūngwá jyuh

**Exercise 16.3** 1 Ngóh móuh mǎtyéh/géi dō gǎp sih 2 Léih gǎmyaht yáuh-  
móuh heui bīndōuh máaih-sung a? 3 Hói-gwāan m̄h wúih dīm (yéung)  
chàh léih ge 4 Yūhgwó léih móuh mǎtyéh mahntàih, ngóhdeih yīhgā hóyh  
chīm yeuk 5 Lóuhbāan m̄h wúih dīm (yéung) laauh léih ge 6 Yūhgwó  
yáuh mǎtyéh tauhsou, hóyh dá lí go lāmá 7 Kéuih yáuh-móuh bīngō'

mătyéh chānchik hóyih jiugu kéuih ga? 8 Yùhgwó léih heui bīndouh léuih-hàhng, geidāk daai màaih ngóh heui 9 Ngóhdeih móuh géi dō/mătyéh chín sái 10 Móuh mătyéh/géi dō yàhn làih taam ngóh

### Unit 17 Questions and answers

**Exercise 17.1** A: 1 Léih séung jòuh yaht-gāang dihg yeh-gāang a? 2 Léih séung gām-lín dihg chēut-lín fong-ga a? 3 Léih séung tēng gúdn yām ngohk) dihg làuhhàhng yāmngohk a? 4 Léih séung tái jūng-yí dihg sái-yí a? 5 Léih séung jyuh sigā yíyún dihg gūnglahp yíyún a? B: 6 Léih yāthaih jūkhāak gāau jōu yāthaih jūkhāak būn jáu 7 Léih yāthaih duhk mahn-fō yāthaih duhk léih-fō 8 Léih yāthaih tūhng ngóh yāthaih heui yāthaih jihgéi heui 9 Léih yāthaih chéng gūngyàhn chau-jái yāthaih jihgéi chau 10 Léih yāthaih tàih jōu teuiyāu yāthaih jyun part-time

**Exercise 17.2** 1 Haih a (móuh wah wo) No (he didn't)/Mhaih ak (yáuh wah ngóh jī) Yes, he did tell me 2 Haih a (mái) No (I don't)/Mhaih ak (yáuh sūi dōu yin ga) Yes (I do sometimes) 3 Haih a (móuh heui) No (I didn't)/Mhaih ak (ngóh yáuh heui) Yes, (I did) 4 Haih a (móuh saai la) No (there isn't)/Mhaih ak (juhng yáuh sūi-sūi) Yes, (there's still a little) 5 Haih a (móuh wo) No (I don't)/Mhaih ak (ngóh yáuh) Yes, (I do) 6 Haih a (mái) No (I don't)/Mhaih ak (yiu) Yes, (I have to) 7 Haih a (juhng meih yáuh) No, not yet/Mhaih ak (yáuh yāt go lèih-gán) Yes, they do, they have one on the way 8 Haih a (mīh háng a) No (he won't)/Mhaih ak, (kéuih háng) Yes, he will

**Exercise 17.3** 1 Ngóh díng tēng dóu a? / Ngóh bīndouh tēng dóu a? / Ngóh tēng-gwái-dóu àh? 2 Bīng bōng kéuih jēk? / Gwái bōng kéuih mē? 3 Ngóh géisih yáuh ngāak-gwo léih a? / Ngóh bīn/gwai yáuh ngāak-gwo léih a? 4 Ngóhdeih gāmyaht díng jòuh dāk saai a? / Ngóhdeih bīndouh jòuh dāk saai a? 5 Sái māt kéuih gaau ngóh a? / Bīn/gwai sái kéuih gaau ngóh a? 6 Léih sái māt gam hóu sām a? / Gwái sái léih gam hóu sām àh?

### Unit 18 Relative clauses

**Exercise 18.1** 1 Tàuhsin dá-dihwá làih gó go deihsáun gīnggéi That estate agent who just called 2 Chih-jó-jik gó go wuihgaisi The accountant who has resigned 3 Yīng-gán-séung gó di geijé Those reporters who are taking pictures 4 Sātjūng-jó sām yaht gó jek gám The dog that went musing for three days 5 Jòuh-gán sahtyihm gó di hohksāang The students who are doing experiments 6 Chēut-jó yún gó go behngyàhn The patient who has got out of the hospital 7 Yāthaih yihm-gau li go mahntàih gó di

**jjün-gâ** The specialists who are studying this problem together 8 **Taam-gwo ngóh géi chí gó go pàhngyáuh** The friend who has visited me a few times 9 **Johug chàn jek mǎau gó ga chē** The car which has bumped into a cat 10 **Bōng kéuih hōi-dōu gó go yīsāng** The surgeon who has done the operation for him

**Exercise 18.2** 1 **Siht jó hóu dō chíu gó gāan gūngsī jāp-jó-lāp** 2 **Ngóh chàhmyaht johng dóu gó go làahmyán haih ngóh lóuhbáan** 3 **Kéuih sèhngyaht daai-jyuh gó jek bīu hóu leang** 4 **Ngóhdeih taam-gwo yāt chí gó dĩ gaasauh haih Méihgwok-yáuh** 5 **Ngóh yuhng-gán gó go dīhnlóuh taai gauh** 6 **Ngóh sé-jó gó géi fūng seun ngin-jó** 7 **Ngóhdeih máaih-jó gó dĩ Gwóngdūng-wá syū hóu gwai** 8 **Léih jūngyi tái gó dĩ hei (dīhnyíng) taai maahn la** 9 **Kéuihdeih yám-jó gó dĩ jáu hóu hēung** 10 **Kéuih sihk gó dĩ yeuhk hóu yáuh-haauh**

**Exercise 18.3** 1 **Ngóh tái-hōi gó go yīsāng haih Gimkiuh bátyihp ge** 2 **Kéuih dĩ jáiléui duhk gó gāan hohkhaauh sáu hóu gwai hohkfai** 3 **Kéuih jyú gó dĩ sung móuh lohk yíh** 4 **Ngóh chéng gó dĩ yáuh-haak chyūhn-bouh lèih chàih saai** 5 **Chih dou gó dĩ hohksāang hóyih chōh hái hauhbīn** 6 **Syūnbou yihpjik hóu gó dĩ gūngsī jeugahn kòhng sīng** 7 **Ngāam-ngāam máaih gó go gongkàhm yáuh Dǎkgwok wahn dou** 8 **Go jái waahk gó dĩ wá hóyih sung bēi yáuh** 9 **Lóuhbáan chéng gó go beisyū meih chíu dou gwo** 10 **Ngóh jūngyi gó dĩ sfusyut dōsou móuh bouhlihk ge**

**Exercise 18.4** 1 **Kémih gei béi ngóh gó go bāau-gwó chāhng dou líng mē héi** The parcel he sent me is so heavy that I can't lift it 2 **Léih tēuijin gó go hohksāang hāan-sih chēut-máau** The student you recommended cheated in the exam 3 **Léih gaaisiuh làih gūngsī jōuh-yé gó go tūhngsih haih ngóh gauh tūhnghohk** The colleague you introduced to work in our company is an old classmate of mine 4 **Chàhmyaht tái-jó gó tou hei ge jyángok haih ngóh ge muhng jūng chihngyáuh** The film I saw yesterday, the star of that film is my dream lover 5 **Go-go jaan (kéuih) dǎkyi gó go sailouh haih wahhyut-yih** The child that everyone praises for being pretty is mixed-race 6 **Ngóhdeih syún-jó (kéuih) jōuh yihyūhn gó go leuhtsi mē jéun heui Bǎkgēng** The lawyer we elected to be legislator is not allowed to go to Beijing 7 **Ngóh dehng-jó gó bām sán syū yuhng làih jōuh chāamháau** The new book I ordered is used for reference 8 **Kéuih wán dóu gó dĩ yeuhk yim hūng-tómh sihk ge** The medicine he found needs to be taken on an empty stomach 9 **Ngóh sang jek gaaijǐ béi kéuih gó go léuihjái haih ngóh meih-fān-chāi** The girl I gave a ring to is my fiancée 10 **Ngóh mùihmúí tūhng kéuih paak-tó gó go yīsāng làih sihk-faauh** The doctor my sister is dating is coming to dinner

*Unit 19 Subordinate clauses*

**Exercise 19.1** 1 daahnhaih 2 dōu 3 jichihh 4 jīhauh 5 jichihh 6 mōuh-leuhn 7 jīhauh 8 mōuhleuhn 9 dōng 10 yānwaih 11 gójahnsí 12 mōuhleuhn

**Exercise 19.2** 1 jichhùhng ... jīhauh 2 dōng ... ge sihhauh/gójahnsí 3 yānwaih ... sóyih 4 gójahnsí 5 chēuihjó ... jī-ngoih, juhng 6 meih . jichihh 7 sēuiyihh ... daahnhaih 8 mōuhleuhn ... dōu 9 jichhùhng . jīhauh 10 sēuiyihh ... daahnhaih

**Exercise 19.3** 1g 2a 3c 4b 5f 6c 7h 8d

*Unit 20 Conditional sentences*

**Exercise 20.1** (Note that in most cases the conjunctions are optional.)  
1 (Yùhgwó) léih m̄h bahpgaak, ngóh jauh wúih hóu sǎtmohng 2 (Yùhgwó) léih chóh háidouh, (léih jauh) wúih syǔfuhk dī 3 (Yùhgwó) yáuh mǎtyéh sǎn lúu, (jauh) geijyuh wán ngóh gòhgō 4 Kéuih (yùhgwó) haih jǎn pǎhngyáuh, (kéuih) jauh wúih mōuh tūhgín bōng léih 5 Léih (yùhgwó) juhng m̄h sǎu-sin, ngóh (jauh) sǎu-sin 6 (Yùhgwó) léih bou-gíng, ngóhdeih jauh séi ngaahng 7 Ngóh (yùhgwó) m̄h daai ngáahn-géng, yehmáahn (jauh) tái m̄h dóu louh páai 8 (Yùhgwó) léih kǎhnlíhk dī, (jauh) yǎtdihng hóyih háau dóu hóu hohkhaauh

**Exercise 20.2** 1a jauhshyun ... dōu b chēuihfēi ... yùhgwó m̄haih 2a yùhgwó ... jauh b yùhgwó ... s̄n 3a jauhshyun ... dōu b chēuihfēi ... yùhgwó m̄haih 4a jíyiu ... jauh b yùhgwó ... jauh 5a chēuihfēi ... yùhgwó m̄haih b jauhshyun ... dōu 6a jíyiu ... jauh b yùhgwó ... s̄n 7a chēuihfēi ... yùhgwó m̄haih b jauhshyun ... dōu 8a yùhgwó ... s̄n b jíyiu ... jauh

**Exercise 20.3** 1a Ngóh yuht làih yuht gēng b Ngóh yuht lám yuht gēng 2a Ngóh yuht làih yuht gwa-jyuh kéuih b Ngóh yuht gwa-jyuh kéuih, yuht séung gín kéuih 3a Kéuih go léui yuht làih yuht leng wo b Kéuih go léui yuht daaih yuht leng wo 4a Ngóh yuht làih yuht jūngyi lí sǎu gō b Ngóh yuht tēng lí sǎu gō yuht jūngyi/Lí sǎu gō ngóh yuht tēng yuht jūngyi 5a Gihn sih yuht làih yuht làahn gáaikyut b Gihn sih yuht tō lohk heui yuht làahn gáaikyut

## Unit 21 Reported speech

**Exercise 21.1** 1 Mùlhmáí wah (kéuih) móuh chin la (wóh) Little sister says she's out of money 2 Sinsāang wah ngóhdeih ján dāk ga la (wóh) The teacher said it's alright for us to leave 3 Gíngchaat wah (kéuihdeih) wán-gán jing-yàhn (wóh) The police said they're looking for witnesses 4 Leuhtsi wah ngóh yiu faai di chím-méng (wóh) The solicitor said you had to sign quickly 5 Yisāng wah ngóh nh̄h yínggōi síhk fihm yéh (wóh) The doctor said I should not eat sweet things 6 Pòhpó wah kéuihdeih nh̄h sík louh fān úkkéi (wóh) Grandma said they couldn't find their way home 7 A-Yí wah (kéuih) máaih-jó káihmaht béi ngóh di jái léui (wóh) Auntie said she had bought some gifts for us 8 Go léui wah (kéuih) yiu heui sāangyaht-wái (wóh) My daughter says she has to go to a birthday party 9 Bōsī wah gūngsí gām lín nh̄h gā yàhn-gūng (wóh) The boss said there'd be no pay rise this year 10 Ngóh taai-tái wah gām jiu yáuh geijé wán ngóh (wóh) My wife said there were reporters looking for me this morning

**Exercise 21.2** 1 A-má mahn kéuihdeih géisih bátyihp wóh 2 Míhng-jái mahn ngóh jūng-mh̄-jūngyi tái hei wóh 3 Dī hohksāang mahn ngóh lóuhgūng haih-mh̄-haih Yíngwok-yàhn wóh 4 A-Sín mahn ngóh séung-mh̄-séung làuh hái Hēunggóng wóh 5 A-Dāk mahn mátyéh haih ngóhdeih síhnggūng ge beikyut wóh 6 Yisāng mahn dímgaai ngóh gam gihnghōng wóh 7 Go beisyū mahn ngóh jouh máit gam híngfáhn wóh 8 Sī gaausauh mahn ngóh gokdāk bínggo jeui yáuh chíhmjät wóh 9 Dī chānchík mahn ngóhdeih dī jái léui góng jūngmán dīhng Yíngmán wóh 10 Go tùhngsìh mahn dím sín hóiyh máaih dóu lí go yúhn-gún wóh

**Exercise 21.3** 1 Ngóh pàhngyáuh gin/hyūn ngóh mhóu gam sēungsām lā! My friend asked/urged me not to be so sad 2 Sinsāang giu ngóhdeih jīkhāak tūhng bāt The teacher told us to stop writing immediately 3 Go tùhngsìh giu kéuih bōng-sán The colleague asked him to help 4 Gíngchaat mihnglūhng ngóh jīkhāak fong dài bá chāung The police ordered me to put down the gun immediately 5 Jyūn-gā gin-yíh ngóh maahn-máan dāng háh sín Experts suggest that I should wait patiently 6 Yisāng hyūn ngóh faai di gaaí yín The doctor urged me to give up smoking quickly 7 Lóuhpòh giu ngóh mhóu gam yeh faan úkkéi (wóh) My wife asked me not to come home so late 8 Go tùhngghohk hyūn ngóh yiu hóu hóu bójuhng sántái My classmate urged me to take care of my health 9 Go leuhtsi gin-yíh ngóh jīkhāak faat fāng leuhtsi seun béi go jōuhak The lawyer suggested that I should send a legal letter to the tenant 10 Ngóh lóuhgūng giu ngóh pùih kéuih chēnt hēui síhk-faahn My husband asked me to go out to dinner with him



## Unit 22 Cantonese speech conventions

**Exercise 22.1** 1 lóuhbáan 2 sífú 3 sǐgēi 4 Wòhng Táai 5 Faat-jái 6 a-pòh

**Exercise 22.2** 1 Māt gam āam a! What a coincidence! 2 Sānfān faailohk Congratulations! (*lit.* newly wed happiness) 3 Gūnghéi saai wo, go bihbi gam dākyl. Congratulations, the baby is so sweet 4 Sāangyaht faailohk Happy birthday 5 Singdaan faailohk (Wish you) Merry Christmas 6 Jūk léih léuihtòuh yuhfaai (Wish you) have a pleasant journey 7 Jūk léih jóu yaht hōngfuhk (formal)/Jūk léih faal dī hōn fāan (informal) (Wish you) get well soon 8 Yám sing (kéni) Bottoms up 9 Gūnghéi faat chòih (*lit.* congratulations, make money) Happy (Chinese) New Year 10 Jūk léih yāt louh seuhn fūng (Wish you) have a smooth journey (by air or sea)

**Exercise 22.3** 1 ㄟ go/wái (haih) ngóh tūhngsih, (giu a-Cream) 2 ㄟ wái haih Máh yísāang 3 ㄟ wái (haih) Yihp gaasauh 4 ㄟ go (haih) ngóh tūhng-hohk 5 ㄟ wái (haih) ngóh taai-tái 6 ㄟ go (haih) ngóh go chíhn-fú 7 ㄟ go (haai) ngóh go daaih jái 8 ㄟ go (haai) ngóh go chíhn-douh léuih-yáuh 9 ㄟ go (haai) ngóh yíhchíhn ge hohksāng 10 ㄟ go (haai) ngóh lóuhgūng/sīnsāang

## Unit 23 Particles and interjections

**Exercise 23.1** 1 lǒ/āma 2 gwa 3 lǒ/āma 4 lǒ/āma 5 gwa 6 gwa 7 lǒ/āma 8 lǒ/āma

**Exercise 23.2** 1 há 2 hó 3 hó 4 há 5 hó 6 há 7 hó 8 há

**Exercise 23.3** 1 chē 2 baih/séi la 3 yí 4 wa(hái) 5 chòih 6 óh

## Unit 24 Colloquial syntax

**Exercise 24.1** 1 Maaih-jó meih a, gāan ūk? 2 Léihdeih yāchàih heui lā, batyuh 3 Ngóh chíh dou yānwaih sāk-chē a, Sijisāan Seuihdouh 4 Ngóh béi léih haak séi la, janhaih 5 Léih yātdihng wúih lám dóu baahnfaat ge, ngóh ji 6 Juhng yáuh sihgaan, maahn-máan góng loh-heui ā, hóyth 7 Léih tàih jóu teuiyāu mē, wúih? 8 Léih síusām jā-chē a, gei-jyuh

**Exercise 24.2** 1 tiuh 2 gauh 3 jek 4 tiuh 5 gihn 6 yéh 7 jek 8 lap

**Exercise 24.3** 1 Tòu hei hóu gwái muhn 2 Bīn-gwái-go háidouh chòuh a? 3 Fái-gwái-sih heui la 4 Ga chē maaih-gwái-jó la 5 Léih heui-jó bīn-

gwái-douh a? 6 Gam gwái chéuhng-hei ga! 7 Bīngō ga chē jō-gwái-jyuh saai a? Bīn-gwai go ga chē jō jyuh saai a? 8 Ngóh m̄h gwái lōu la!

### Unit 25 Code-mixing and loanwords

**Exercise 25.1** 1 Léih *call-jō* yīsāng meih a? 2 Faai dī *set faan* ngāam go mahtmah lā 3 Kéuih haih-maih *short-jō* a? 4 Jingfú *review-gán* lī go policy 5 Ngóh tūhng kéuih *swap-jō* 6 Ngóh *date-gwo* kéuih géi chí 7 Léih jēung cheque yīhng̃ng *clear-jō* 8 Kéuih ngāam-ngāam *quit-jō* fahn gūng 9 Bātyūh léih *send faan* lāih béi ngóh lā 10 Gūngsī yīhng̃ng *promote-gán* lī géi jek sǎn product

**Exercise 25.2** 1 Kéuih tūhng léih *friend-m̄h-friend* (fēn-m̄h-fēn) a? Arc you and he friendly? 2 Léih *pre-m̄h-predict* dóu ngóh sēngg dím a? Can you predict how I want it? 3 Kéuihdeih *jeuigahn bi-m̄h-bi* s̄h a? Have they been busy lately? 4 Lóuhbáan *in-m̄h-invite* dī client heui dá golf a? Will the boss invite the clients to play golf? 5 Léih *en-m̄h-enjoy* tái kéuih dī e-mail a? Do you enjoy reading his e-mail? 6 Lóuhbáan tái yūhn go report, *im-m̄h-impress* a? When the boss finished reading the report, was he impressed? 7 Go *exam ea-m̄h-easy* a? Was the exam easy? 8 Kéuih béi fān *fair-m̄h-fair* a? Is he fair in marking? 9 Go *show en-m̄h-entertaining* a? Was the show entertaining? 10 Kéuih *de-m̄h-delete* go file a? Will he delete the file?

**Exercise 25.3** 1 fānilóu = file 2 gāfō-sik = brown (*lit.* coffee colour) 3 jēléi = jelly 4 wēnjái = van 5 sām̄māhu-yú = salmon (fish) 6 lūmbá = number 7 sālét = salad 8 jīsí = cheese 9 yiusō = insurance 10 jāudá-yú-tōng = chowder (fish soup)



# GLOSSARY OF GRAMMATICAL TERMS

**aspect** a distinction between ways of describing an action or situation, such as the habitual aspect in **sīhk-hōi sāi-chāan** 'to eat Western food regularly', and the delimitative aspect in **sīhk-háh sāi-chāan** 'to eat Western food once in a while'.

**attributive** an adjective used to indicate an attribute, as in **cho ge táifaat** 'wrong views'.

**causative** a sentence type expressing how an event is caused to happen, as in 'he made me cry'.

**changed tone** a tone which differs from the citation tone, usually becoming the high rising tone as in the second syllable of **léuih-yán** 'woman'.

**citation tone** the tone used when a word is cited in isolation, e.g. when it is read from a written character.

**concessive** a type of sentence used to concede a point, as in 'although I am poor ...' which concedes being poor.

**contraction** a case when two or more words are reduced, as when English 'it is' becomes 'it's', Cantonese **sí yāt sí** 'have a try' becomes **sí-sí** (with change of tone).

**coverb** a verb which characteristically occurs together with another verb, like **túhng** meaning 'with' or 'accompany(ing)'.

**diphthong** a sound combining two or more vowel sounds, e.g. **dōu** 'all', 'also' which begins with the sound of *o* and ends with *u*.

**focus** an element of the sentence which is stressed and represents new or important information, as in 'He asked **ME** (of all people)'.

**indirect command** a type of sentence which reports a command, e.g. 'He asked me to pay the bill'.

**intransitive verb** a verb used without an object, like the verb 'cry' in 'She's crying'.

**minimal pair** a pair of words, sentences, etc. differing in only one respect, e.g. **gāi** 'chicken' vs. **gāai** 'street' which differ only in the length of the diphthong.

**palatalization** a change in the sound of a consonant caused by contact between the tongue and the palate (the roof of the mouth)

**predicative** an adjective used to state a property of something, as in **Ni go táifaat cho ge** 'this view is wrong'.

**quantification** the area of meaning concerning expressions such as 'all', 'some', etc., which refer to relative quantities of things rather than to individual things.

**reduplication** grammatical pattern in which a word or syllable is repeated

**register** a form of speech associated with a certain degree of formality, e.g. colloquial register.

**reported speech** those types of sentence which report what someone else has said, e.g. 'She says there's no time for that'.

**serial verbs** two or more verbs used in a series within the same clause as in 'Let's go and eat'.

**subordinate** a subordinate clause is not complete by itself but accompanies a main clause to which it is subordinate. For example, a clause beginning with 'although', as in 'Although we know little about this topic' is a subordinate clause, which must be followed by a main clause.

**topicalization** taking an element of a sentence and putting it in the first (or occasionally second) position, making it the 'topic' of the sentence, as in 'Oysters I can't eat'.

**transitive verb** a verb used with an object following it, like the verb 'push' in 'She's pushing the trolley'.

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